



3 1761 11848314 8

Library and Information Services for Local Government in Great Britain



REF

GOV
DOC.

by Lesley Grayson



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2023 with funding from
University of Toronto

<https://archive.org/details/31761118483148>

**LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES
FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT
IN GREAT BRITAIN**

Edited by
Toby Daymond

*THE LIBRARY INFORMATION
SOCIETY*

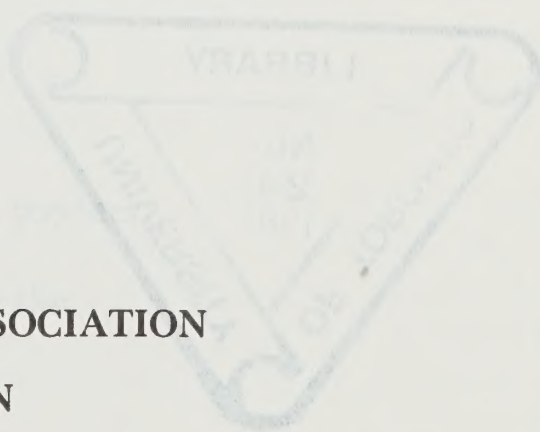
1984

LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN GREAT BRITAIN

by

Lesley Grayson

**THE LIBRARY ASSOCIATION
LONDON**



LA

© The Polytechnic of North London 1978

Compiled by the Research Department of
The School of Librarianship, The Polytechnic of North
London on behalf of the British Library

Grayson, Lesley

Library and information services to local government.

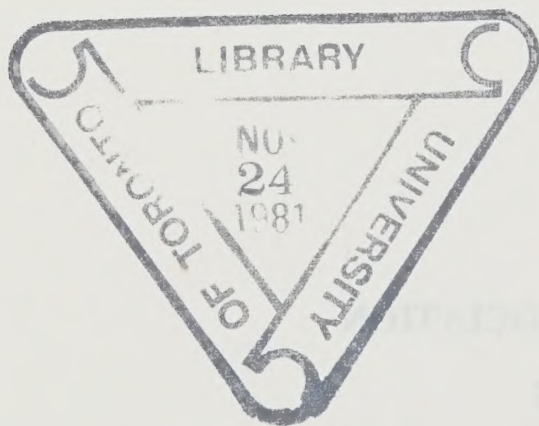
1. Local government — Information services — Great
Britain

I. Title II. Library Association

029'.9'352041 JS3113

ISBN 0-85365-810-2

JS
3113
G63



IBM Composer Typesetting by The Library Association

Printed in Great Britain by
Biddles Ltd., Guildford, Surrey

Contents

Foreword	5
Introduction and acknowledgements	8
1 Developments promoting information flow in local government	11
2 Patterns of information handling	20
3 Information users and their needs	31
4 The development of documentary information services	46
5 Documentation	68
6 Services and systems	92
7 Co-operation between information services	125
8 Local government information and the community	148
9 The future	161
Appendix	170
Bibliography	175
Index	229

Foreword

The provision of information services to agencies of local government is not a new phenomenon (Mrs Grayson's bibliography contains items dated as early as 1909). The development of such services, however, has been slow and haphazard and has been affected more than once by economic recession as well as by the small size of many local authorities prior to local government reorganisation.

In recent years reorganisation of local government has resulted in larger authorities in which the problems of information transfer can be seen more clearly. The publication of the Bains report and the adoption of a corporate management philosophy by many authorities have also drawn attention to the need for effective information transfer. As a result, some public library systems have ventured into the sphere of local government information services, some more wholeheartedly than others and all with little more guidance on what services to offer (or to whom) than is provided by previous experience in the field of special librarianship, and the experience of such pioneers in the field as the Greater London Council, Cheshire County Library and Leicestershire County Libraries and Information Services.

Mrs Grayson's report now goes a long way towards filling a gap in the literature: it is not, and was never intended to be, a practical, how-to-do-it handbook, but its wide-ranging review of services and perceptive insights into the problems may be more effective than any handbook in raising interest and provoking intelligent development of practical policies.

The role of foreword-writer permits me, I assume, to select those aspects of this book which accord with my own prejudices and interests and I welcome the opportunity to emphasise what I consider to be important issues.

Firstly, the emphasis put upon the indivisibility of information is a valuable corrective to the assumption (too common among even those

who call themselves information scientists) that the proper focus of information work is externally-generated documents. Those who work in local government do not divide information into types that accord with librarians' preconceptions: 'information' consists of anything that can be brought to bear upon a problem. Internally-generated data and documents may be as relevant, or more relevant, to work interests and priorities as journal articles or monographs. The assumption that information recorded in journals is 'useful' information is taken directly from the field of scientific research where such publication has a variety of uses for authors and for potential readers. The assumption is so far untested in the field of local government and in most other practitioner-orientated fields. The re-orientation of role that this view of the indivisibility of information leads to will be difficult to learn, but it is one that must be learnt if librarians wish to be seen by their colleagues in local government as performing a useful function.

The second area in which I find myself in complete agreement with Mrs Grayson is in her comments on the need to understand the user and potential user of local government information services. She comments: 'The greater the degree of personal contact the greater the response of information users to the service. . .'. The gaining of an adequate level of understanding of the work-life of the user and the build-up of mutual trust ought to be made the first priority of anyone entering this field of work. Research can help in this by giving the newcomer a broad appreciation of the nature of work in local government and of the role of information in the performance of that work.

Consider, for example, the work of an Area Director in a social services department: one of the Project INISS* case studies reveals that one such individual spent 32 per cent of his time in formal, scheduled meetings, and a further 20 per cent of his time in travelling. 71 per cent of his information-transfer events lasted only five minutes or less (42 per cent lasted one minute or less), and only 17 per cent were reading events. 55 per cent of these involved letters or memoranda and *a mere 1 per cent involved journals*. 37 per cent of the events involving written information were concerned with clients. These data enable one to develop a picture of the work-role of the user and to appreciate the problems he faces in trying to apportion time to reading. They also indicate the difficult task that an information worker faces if he is to make any significant impact upon the performance of a user in his work role.

The third point that strikes a chord with me is the need to monitor and evaluate such services as are provided. This takes time and effort and, consequently, is expensive to perform. At the level of the one-man

*Project INISS = Information Needs and Services in Social Services Departments

departmental information service it can be fairly straightforward, however, and because of the close contact such an information worker has with his clients there is less need for very formalised information gathering. For a service offered to a number of departments from a public-library base, however, the need is greater because it is more necessary to be sure that services are of the right kind and are not being operated wastefully. Again, research may help: following on from Project INISS we are hoping to carry out further work on local government information problems, including the development of self-help packages for those who wish to monitor their services.

Finally, there are a number of other topics that Mrs Grayson deals with which deserve to be drawn to the reader's attention—the whole problem area of the documentation of the internally-generated literature of local government (Chapter 5); the potential for, and problems of co-operation (Chapter 7) and the relationship between local government information and community information (Chapter 8). These are topics of central concern, and it seems likely that the profession will spend a good deal of time in the future debating the issues that Mrs Grayson spells out so clearly.

There is much in this work to interest not only librarians but also senior officers in local government from the chief executive downwards. One hopes that it will be read by them and that it will become a focus for local debate and an encouragement to the implementation of satisfactory services. The report comes at a crucial time because it should help to re-kindle interests which have received financial body-blows in recent years, and because it points to a line of development for the future when improved economic conditions may allow a re-thinking of priorities.

T D Wilson, PhD
Senior Lecturer in Information Studies
University of Sheffield

October 1977

Introduction and Acknowledgements

This book is not a comprehensive survey of library and information services in local government; it is a review of some of the more interesting trends in recent years. Indeed, in a rapidly developing field of this kind a comprehensive survey would quickly become redundant, even if it were possible to produce. Information uses and flows in local government are highly complex and one aspect only is covered here—the development of library-based documentation information services for officers and elected members. However, there is some attempt to indicate the wider information environment in which such services operate; in particular the book stresses the importance of relationships between librarians and other kinds of information provider within an authority and the need to develop a flexible view of information provision which encompasses them all.

Although it is accepted that documents and other library materials are only one of many information sources used in local authorities, the growth of library services should be of interest to local government as a whole in its attempts to develop a more coherent approach to information provision. However, it is important to remember that information is required to support specific political and administrative processes, and an academic study of this kind which looks primarily at the ‘technical’ aspects of handling one kind of information can only contribute in part to local government’s understanding of the possibilities. Unless local authorities can relate the improvement, or introduction, of information services to the more effective solution of real problems, their response to library-based research is likely to be minimal and, at the same time, librarians who fail to develop some understanding of the ultimate purpose of their work in local government will have a limited impact. Perhaps most important, an inability to appreciate how their services fit in with other kinds of information provision may sometimes blind librarians to the real needs of their users and prevent them from responding in the

most effective way. This book, therefore, is not a definitive text for the library school student wishing to make a career in local government, nor for the local authority wishing to set up a service. It does not attempt to produce a blueprint for the perfect service and hopefully makes it clear that such a blueprint is illusory in an area of information work where local conditions and politics (in the widest sense) are so influential. It simply relates the experience of some of those already working in the field and describes their response to some of the more commonly encountered problems.

The basic 'data' was collected during a one-year research project financed by the British Library Research and Development Department and based at the Polytechnic of North London School of Librarianship between June 1976 and May 1977. Much of the evidence came from the larger local authorities, whose resources and experience in this field were considerable. Despite its origins such evidence offers guidelines for smaller authorities in the UK and particularly for the great mass of district councils. There is, too, little direct evidence from central government departments and professional bodies; since their influence on local government is pervasive the research enquiry looked only at their connections with general systems of information provision and use. The final report presented to the British Library in May 1977 described opinions and practices current during that period and its major purpose was to provide basic information on which to make decisions about further necessary research or action in the local government field. However, as a bird's eye view of library activities in local government, the project advisory committee felt that the final report was worthy of wider distribution. As a result, this book, based on that report, is published by the Library Association. It should be of interest not only to librarians wishing to know more about developments in a relatively new area of information work, but also to those many local authorities with a limited view of the role and potential contribution of the profession in solving information problems.

The bibliography at the end of the book was also prepared as part of the British Library project. It includes all the references mentioned in the main text as well as other material of interest to those who might wish to read more widely.

The views expressed in the following pages are of course personal but, as befits an 'impartial' review, they are also based firmly on those of information handlers working in the field who were contacted during the course of the British Library project. Grateful thanks are due to all of them, but particularly to the many non-librarians who participated and so often gave new slants on old problems. All errors and omissions are the responsibility of the author alone, but without the help of the project advisory committee, both individually and collectively, there is no doubt they would have been much more numerous. Thanks are also

due to them; to Jim Hennessy, Senior Lecturer at the Polytechnic of North London School of Librarianship, who acted as project head and as editor of this book; to Marian Biddell and Ann Gomersall for typing; and to Jean Bird for providing the index.

Lesley Grayson

Winchester, 1978

CHAPTER 1

Developments Promoting Information Flow in Local Government

The work of all large organisations is dependent to some extent upon information, and local government is no exception. There may well be people in local government who still subscribe to the view that there is nothing a government hates more than to be well informed for it makes the process of arriving at decisions much more complicated and difficult, but it is unlikely that they are in a majority. Information or data has been described as the raw material of local government and it is reasonable to suppose that the effectiveness of decisions is in some way related to the quality of the information on which they are based. If this proposition is accepted, it follows that the development of efficient methods of gathering and exploiting information is crucial to the proper management of authorities at all levels.

It is certainly true that interest in the ways information is communicated and used within local government has increased significantly in recent years, particularly since local government reorganisation in 1974.* Both officers and elected members seem more aware of the importance of accurate and timely information in their everyday work, and conscious that a lack of such information diminishes their potential influence in the authority. This is particularly evident in the case of members, some of whom express considerable frustration at the apparent inequality of access to information vis-à-vis officers,¹ but it is also a factor behind the increased militancy of certain sections of the public who feel that information is sometimes deliberately withheld to protect the vested interests of the authority.

The reasons behind the increased 'information awareness' of local government are complex, and one can only speculate on the factors involved. It is important not to take too simplistic a view of the role of information, particularly at policy making level where other influ-

*Local government reorganisation took place in May 1975 in Scotland.

ences, such as political alignment, are often more significant than 'objective' arguments about the facts of a situation. Possession of, and awareness about, information do not of themselves ensure the solution of problems, and it is necessary to develop some understanding of the nature of information itself, the role it plays in decision making at all levels and the importance attached to it by different kinds of people in local government.

Bearing these caveats in mind it is, nevertheless, possible to isolate some factors which appear to have influenced demands for more systematic information provision in local government.

STRUCTURAL CHANGES IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Local government reorganisation in England, Wales and Scotland effected radical changes in the number and responsibilities of local authorities by creating a multi-tier system of local government and re-allocating some important functions. Many of the developments in statistical and documentary information services occurred after reorganisation and it seems likely that this event not only stimulated demands for services but also presented a unique opportunity to introduce them.

In England and Wales the Local Government Act 1972² abolished 58 county councils and replaced them with 47 non-metropolitan and 6 metropolitan county councils. The metropolitan counties, centred on large urban conurbations, were entirely new creations and some new shire counties, including Cleveland and Avon, also came into being on 1 April 1974.

At the lower level the Act abolished over 1,300 borough and district councils and replaced them with a total of 369 new districts (333 non-metropolitan district councils in England and Wales and 36 metropolitan district councils in England). Parish councils in being before 1 April 1974 remained, and 296 urban and rural districts became parishes on that day. In Wales parish councils have been replaced by community councils.

The allocation of functions between counties and districts emphasises the inter-dependence of the two tiers with a split in many areas. Counties, for example, are responsible for strategic planning while districts deal with local planning matters; counties deal with traffic and transport matters and highways while districts cover off-street car-parking and, in non-metropolitan districts, public transport undertakings; refuse collection is a district function while disposal is carried out by counties. Public library services in England and Wales are the responsibility of the 36 metropolitan districts, the 47 non-metropolitan counties, and the 32 London boroughs. Sections 101-102 of the 1972 Act give authority to a county council to arrange for districts within its area to carry out certain county council functions on an agency basis, principally highways, plann-

ing, refuse disposal, consumer protection and libraries.

In Scotland, the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973³ abolished 33 county councils and 398 city, burgh and district councils, and replaced them with nine regional authorities and 53 district councils. In addition, areas are also permitted to establish community councils, with the approval of the Secretary of State for Scotland, but these bodies have no statutory powers. In broad terms, the regional councils are responsible for strategic planning, transportation and roads, industrial policy, police, fire, education and social work, while districts deal with local planning, housing, local health and amenity services and building control. Some areas such as tourism, recreation, derelict land and museums and art galleries are dealt with concurrently by regional and district authorities.

In addition to changes in local government itself, the reorganisation of the health and water services in 1974 also affected local authority responsibilities. For example, personal health services previously administered by the local authority are now the responsibility of the reorganised National Health Service, and local authority sewerage and sewage disposal functions have been transferred to regional water authorities under the Water Act 1973.⁴

One cannot, of course, divorce the effects of structural changes in local government from other developments but there are considerable information implications in reorganisation. The number of lower tier authorities has been significantly reduced and many now face the problems of internal communication inherent in all large bureaucratic organisations. It has become increasingly difficult for the individual to maintain an overall view of the authority's policies and activities⁵ and information transfer is becoming a complex business, the province of computer experts and other information specialists. Many authorities are the result of an amalgamation of several old councils and may have the additional problem of geographically dispersed office accommodation and incompatible information systems which need rationalisation.

The creation of a two-tier system, with a split in some functions, and the introduction of new statutory bodies at local level also implies a greater need for efficient channels of communication between different governmental agencies. Local authorities have never been self-contained, but reorganisation has stressed their inter-dependence and, in some cases, the need for a regular exchange of information between tiers has been given formal approval.⁶

The information requirements of reorganisation are accepted to a certain extent by the 1972 Act itself which granted discretionary powers to county councils to carry out research and collect information. In this respect it follows the London Government Act 1963⁷ which heralded the reorganisation of London local government in 1965 and included a statutory responsibility requiring the Greater London Council to set up a body to carry out these functions.

INCREASED STATUTORY RESPONSIBILITIES

In addition to structural changes local government has also had to contend with increasing responsibilities imposed by central government at a time of financial restraint. The list of Acts, circulars and statutory instruments affecting local government directly in the last few years seems almost endless. It includes the:

Trades Descriptions Act 1968, the Fair Trading Act 1973, the Prices Act 1974 and the Consumer Credit Act 1974—all of these have a major effect on local Trading Standards/Consumer Protection Departments;

Civil Defence (Planning) Regulations 1974—requires the Greater London Council and all county councils to develop local war emergency plans and provide effective public information services in time of war;

Housing Act 1974—increases the powers of local authorities in areas of poor housing by giving them the ability to create housing action areas and priority neighbourhoods. The Act also set the seal of government disapproval on large scale compulsory clearance and redevelopment in favour of small scale urban renewal and housing rehabilitation, thus heralding a change in housing strategies at local level;

Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970—includes a requirement for local authorities to compile comprehensive registers of such people in their areas;

Children Act 1975—clarifies and extends local authority responsibilities in relation to the care and adoption of children;

Community Land Act 1975—gives local authorities extensive powers to acquire land for development and to dispose of it for private development where appropriate. Functions under the Act are divided between counties and districts on the basis of Land Acquisition and Management Schemes developed at local level.

EEC legislation is also having an increasing impact on local authorities and a number are appointing officers specifically to deal with this kind of information. Legislation on food and drugs, for example, is becoming so complex that the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has appointed an officer to keep local authorities up to date on changes in regulations and methods of analysis.

In addition to new statutory responsibilities, local authorities are also faced with the problems resulting from rapid social and environmental change. In urban areas authorities may have to deal with the

problems of inner city decay—multiple deprivation, an ageing population, family violence, vandalism, etc.—while in rural areas there may be special problems associated with declining job opportunities, public transport and access to social and health services. In the modern ‘corporate state’ social and environmental problems are increasingly viewed as the province of government and in practical terms this often means local government. Finance is, of course, provided from national sources through the rate support grant but this has not prevented severe economic problems in the local sphere in recent years.

There are a number of obvious implications in these developments for the use and flow of information within local government. Authorities are now required to absorb a great deal more information emanating from central government and, lately, the EEC. They are also required to collect and organise more information at local level for submission to central government under the terms of various Acts. This latter responsibility has created a number of problems and is one reason behind the establishment of groups like the National and Local Government Statistical Liaison Committee⁸ which is designed to co-ordinate the statistical activities of central and local government in order to improve the flow of information in both directions.

The assumption of new responsibilities, particularly in the social and environmental spheres, means that local authorities need to widen their information ‘net’ to cover subjects which were formerly marginal to their activities—for example, an understanding of some aspects of child psychology may be necessary for planners considering the problem of vandal-proof pedestrian precincts. They may also need to develop new methods of approaching problems and this can imply the restructuring of existing sources of information as well as the acquisition of new ones. Local government is full of new concepts and techniques, mostly unknown ten years ago—social malaise, environmental impact, gentrification—and these all have some basis in original research or information acquired from some outside source. Perhaps their most important characteristics in information terms are their fluidity and evanescence; both the problems and projected solutions change constantly and information systems need to be flexible.

NEW MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES

Fresh methods of approaching problems, whether new or traditional, are another feature of post-reorganisation local government. Rigid departmentalism has given way to a corporate, multi-disciplinary approach to problems in which issues are considered in relation to the total resources and expertise of the authority. This has considerable implications for the flow of information—implications recognised to some extent by the Bains Report on management in local government⁹ which set the pattern

for management structures followed by most authorities since 1974. Bains was concerned with the flow of information to both members and officers as was its Scottish equivalent, the Paterson Report.¹⁰

Although corporate management has been accepted by many authorities as a useful framework for local government activities and policy making, there is growing doubt as to its practical effectiveness. Some argue that the new framework is limited in value because supporting information continues to flow along the old departmental channels and is organised or presented to serve the needs of obsolete management structures.¹¹ Attempts have been made to overcome these problems through the development of monitoring and performance review systems designed to keep members and officers up to date with the authority's progress on a regular basis, but these also are not without their difficulties. One basic problem is the apparent inability of some statistical management information systems to present data in a format which meets the needs of the corporate management system.¹²

The possible mismatch between the needs of corporate management and the information supporting it can have considerable implications for the degree of specialised information handling skills required in an authority. It may also have an indirect effect on the demand for information, particularly in the case of elected members. Corporate structures, such as policy and resources committees and joint officer/member working groups, are intended to improve the member's ability to contribute effectively to policy making by bringing him into a closer working relationship with officers. However, some commentators suggest that corporate management with its rational, technical image has depoliticised local government and belittled the role of the politician in relation to the professional officer. Members sometimes feel frustration at their apparent powerlessness in the face of the bureaucratic machine and this may turn to resentment if officers appear deliberately to deny them access to relevant information.¹³ This is probably a major reason behind the members' demands for specialised information services in the last few years, particularly services designed to give them access to 'alternative' information produced outside the authority itself.¹⁴

Corporate management is equally likely to affect the officer's demand for information since it frequently involves the development of new approaches to problems. This, combined with the increased responsibilities imposed by legislation, has produced greatly increased research activity in local government,¹⁵ particularly in social and socio-economic areas. Authorities are now generating more information in the form of survey reports and research studies of all kinds¹⁶ and demanding access to wider information sources on which to base their work.

MORE OPEN GOVERNMENT

The growth of more open participatory democracy at local level is a

noticeable development in recent years, although more disillusioned observers argue that it is little more than cosmetic surgery designed to lull the fears of middle-class intellectuals about the extension of government power. Information is an important component of participation which implies an improved flow of information from the local authority to the public, either in documents or by word of mouth; better knowledge on the part of the authority of the views of the electorate and of developments of all kinds in the area; and an active seeking of public opinion, sometimes as a statutory responsibility.¹⁷

The natural inertia of large organisations has meant that few authorities have been able to respond to demands for information in exactly the way required by the more militant sections of the community. The amount of information released through public participation documents, information and advice centres, and the opening of council and committee meetings to the public has increased enormously, but it is questionable whether this has led to more informed local government. Local government may have improved its knowledge of the electorate but it seems unable to make much impact on its own image with the public. Indeed, the image may well be worsening with the apparent continual decline in the quality of services in the face of successive rises in rates. The general attitude towards all forms of government authority seems less deferential than in the past and while some people lapse into apathy in the face of bureaucracy,¹⁸ a vociferous minority does exist to question the authority's activities. One section of the community may therefore be indifferent to almost all attempts at communication, while another may demand more and more information but remain suspicious of its political or administrative sources. Local government thus not only requires new kinds of information, it has to reassess its methods of public relations and opinion seeking.

These comments on the increased demand for information in local government are of necessity crude and speculative since little research has been done on the patterns of information use and flow within authorities. It is also true that discussions about demands for information and the methods used to satisfy them are of limited value unless set against some overall view of what the authority is doing and to what ends. All organisations, however haphazardly they may work, create demands for information, and the development of methods to ensure that information flows efficiently towards those who want or need it is the principal subject of this review. However, investment in more efficient information services is meaningless unless it can be related to agreed aims and objectives; without such a framework authorities cannot assess the costs and benefits of information or even what information they require.

The apparent failure of some authorities to develop a clear view of the purpose behind their activities and the relationships between them

contributes to their inability to recognise the value of, say, effective documentary information services; it also may contribute to the vague sense of dissatisfaction felt by those information handlers who cannot see any clear link between what they do and the 'real' world of local government. Information often seems to have little real effect on decisions or policy making and people may be forgiven for thinking that change in local government is often as much a result of irresistible pressure from outside or of 'politics', as of a rational approach to problems.

It is important to recognise, therefore, that this book is only looking at a partial aspect of information provision in local government and cannot do more than throw some light on documentary information services as one facet of a wider problem. It needs to be considered in the light of a broader view of what local government is doing—along the lines of work done, for example, by the Local Authorities Management Services and Computer Committee (LAMSAC)¹⁹ on management information requirements as a whole. Without this framework documentary information services will inevitably find it difficult to develop suitable points of reference for their own activities.

REFERENCES AND NOTES

- 1 EDDISON, T. Officers and members. *Municipal Journal*, 29 November 1974, 82(48), pp 1518, 1520.
- 2 *LOCAL Government Act, 1972*. HMSO, 1972. Chapter 70.
- 3 *LOCAL Government (Scotland) Act, 1973*. HMSO, 1973. Chapter 65.
- 4 *WATER Act, 1973*. HMSO, 1973. Chapter 37.
- 5 VERNON, B. Did reform help the member? *Municipal Review*, April 1975, 46(544), pp 24-25.
- 6 DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT. *Local Government Act 1972. Town and country planning; co-operation between authorities*. HMSO, 31 May 1973. (DoE Circular 74/73).
- 7 *LONDON Government Act, 1963*. HMSO, 1963. Chapter 33.
- 8 The aim of this organisation is to inform local government about published and unpublished statistics available from central government; to inform central government about local statistical needs and problems; to co-ordinate the statistical activities of central and local government in order to improve the flow of information in both directions; and to discuss common problems such as the development of acceptable statistical standards and definitions.
- 9 DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT. *The new local authorities management and structure*. HMSO, 1972. (Chairman: M.A. Bains).

- 10 WORKING GROUP ON SCOTTISH LOCAL GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT STRUCTURES. *The new Scottish local authorities; organisation and management structures*. HMSO, 1973.
- 11 KERSHAW, P.B. Information for corporate management. *Public Finance and Accountancy*, November 1974, 1(11), pp 358-360.
- 12 EARWICKER, J. Member involvement in corporate planning and management; some notes on current experience. *Corporate Planning*, June 1975, 2(2), pp 17-20.
- 13 THORNHILL, W. The squeeze on councillors. *Local Government Chronicle*, 14 November 1975, 121(5668), pp 1061-1062.
- 14 RHODES, R. The new politics of local government—3. *Local Government Chronicle*, 13 August 1976, 121(5706), pp 752-753.
- 15 EVERSLEY, D.E.C. and MOODY, M. *The growth of planning research since the early 1960s*. Social Science Research Council, 1976.
- 16 GRAYSON, L. British local government documentation. *Government Publications Review*, 1976, 3(2), pp 203-211.
- 17 For example in structure plan inquiries.
- 18 MALLABER, N. The apathy trap. *Municipal Journal*, 8 October 1976, 84(41), p 1129
- 19 LOCAL AUTHORITIES MANAGEMENT SERVICES AND COMPUTER COMMITTEE. *Information (what local governors need to know); interim report of the General Management Panel of LAMSAC*. LAMSAC, December 1976.

Patterns of Information Handling

This book is largely concerned with one particular response to the increasing demands for information in local government—the development of documentary information services, usually library based, designed to collect, organise and disseminate published and semi-published literature for a wide range of information users. The major purpose of most existing documentary services is to improve the flow of externally generated information produced outside the authority itself by selecting material from the mass of literature produced in the world at large and presenting it to information users in a variety of ways. In most cases documentary services are not directly concerned with sources of information produced inside the authority except in the sense of maintaining good contacts with the people producing and handling this kind of information in order to refer information users to them when necessary.

Although there has been no systematic investigation of information use and flow in local government, it is safe to say that a large number of different channels of information flow exist and that information is communicated through a variety of media. At the same time there appears to be little appreciation of the overall role of information in local government, even with the advent of ‘information dependent’ management techniques and the move towards a corporate approach to problems. Information is not normally viewed as a corporate resource, and information services have tended to develop in response to localised need without any form of central co-ordination or appreciation of how different kinds of information interact.

An important consideration in the *ad hoc* and fragmented development of services of all kinds has been the failure to consider information needs in relation to the aims and objectives of the local authority so that attention has tended to focus on the mechanics of information collection and exploitation rather than on its ultimate purpose. Considerable strides have been made, for instance, in the development of

sophisticated computer-based management information systems but they have rarely been entirely successful in matching their output to the needs of information users. LAMSAC's interim report on the management information requirements of senior officers and elected members recognises this problem and is founded on a particular corporate approach to problem solving which enables the research team to base its recommendations about the management and use of information on certain fundamental principles, including¹ :

‘collection of information is a support service to the activity of an authority;

policy making and its supporting information are linked;

for effective management, it is necessary that policy planning, performance review and the required supporting information should be linked in a system responsive to changing needs’.

Nevertheless, it is still true to say that most authorities fail to appreciate to the full the relationships between different kinds of information source with the result that information handling is highly fragmented even within departments. The 1972 report on a *General Information System for Planning* (GISP) found, for example, that the four planning departments studied all used different systems of information retrieval and that there was a tendency for individual sections within departments to develop their own specialised techniques. This proliferation of systems was found at all levels down to individual planners who might be working on specific projects.² The GISP study team also concluded that ‘the design of an information system for a planning department could not be considered in isolation from the activities of other local departments. . .’ and that there was a need for co-ordination of data collection, recording and supply both within local planning authorities and between authorities.

A more recent LAMSAC study of filing systems in local government found a similar picture with authorities supporting several often incompatible systems and a tendency for individual sections or offices to develop their own schemes.³

VARIETY OF INFORMATION HANDLERS

Information flow in local government is undoubtedly a complex business and there is inevitable specialisation in this activity within even the smallest authority. All kinds of people hold or exploit information in various forms and, while they may not all consider themselves to be information handlers, they are essential to the communications system

both within the authority and between it and the outside world. Obvious examples include computer scientists developing management information systems; administrative officers creating internal filing systems; librarians dealing with externally published literature; public relations officers promoting the authority's policies and activities to the outside world; and committee clerks organising minutes, agendas and other official records of the authority. In a corporately organised authority there may be even more 'information people' creating or reorganising information for various purposes and including research and intelligence officers and corporate planners.

In addition to these formally recognised information handlers there are other people in local government who assume an information role as part of their job specification or simply through natural inclination. These are sometimes known as 'gatekeepers' and can include research and training officers, officers responsible for liaison with other departments, personal assistants, secretaries, even porters. In some cases these people may have access to tangible stores of information, like correspondence files or internal procedural manuals, while others acquire information simply by being in close contact with people at policy making level; they know what is going on before it has reached the formal stage of being written down or circulated in a departmental file. To an extent every officer in local government is an information handler in the sense that the most up-to-date source of information on his work is the officer himself, and his ability or willingness to keep other people informed of what he is doing is a crucial factor in the overall information awareness of the authority.

Division of labour in information handling is essential in a large organisation where so many different kinds of information source are involved. A management information system handling raw data and a library containing published literature are both information stores and it may be immaterial to the information user which one of these provides the solution to his problem. However, the techniques necessary for organising and exploiting particular forms of information are sufficiently distinct to require the employment of various information handling skills if an authority is to get the maximum benefit from the information it holds. Difficulties arise because of the failure to see the relationships between the various information stores and, as indicated earlier, this is partly due to the apparent inability of local authorities to relate the flow of information to an overall view of their aims and objectives. Without this framework it can be extremely difficult for individual information handlers to see how their particular expertise affects the development of policies or the taking of decisions or how it relates to work being done by other information handlers.

As a result the attitudes of these people towards the information they hold vary enormously. Some, like the public relations officer or

the local government librarian, may consider themselves primarily as information disseminators but their attitudes towards the role of information may be very different. The librarian is usually concerned with 'factual' information which he believes should be made as widely available as possible in order to improve the quality of background information on which decisions are taken, regardless of possible conflicts between that information and established policy. A public relations officer, on the other hand, may consider information largely from the standpoint of a preconceived view of what the authority's image should be in the outside world.

In contrast, other information handlers such as committee clerks may restrict their information dissemination activities to a rigidly defined group of people and be unwilling to release material outside even to other parts of the authority. Like the public relations officer they may view information from a 'political' standpoint in the sense that they consider the implications of wider dissemination in terms of the effect on their particular bit of the organisation. As a result a committee clerk may be unwilling to release agendas for meetings to the press in case the committee is embarrassed and may institute his own system of classification to restrict the availability of controversial committee reports. Detailed access to committee documentation is often very limited, at least as far as recent reports are concerned, although there is some evidence of a change in attitude with the development of more sophisticated manual and computerised indexing systems in a few authorities.

The relative emphasis placed by information handlers on the organisational and manipulative aspects of their jobs also varies. Some, like filing clerks and clerical officers in charge of departmental libraries, may make very little, if any, attempt to exploit information for the benefit of users or to disseminate it actively, and in these cases 'information' is largely a collection of documents to be organised in some way and maintained in good order. Custodial information stores of this kind are common in most authorities and are a reflection of the failure of local government to appreciate the role of information as an integral part of the management system.

Computer-based management information systems, in contrast to the custodial store, are generally designed to manipulate information for specific purposes and, sometimes, to disseminate it. However, as the LAMSAC report on management information requirements suggests, the failure to relate information systems to the authority's aims and objectives has resulted in an over-emphasis on system performance at the expense of the needs of the information user. In the absence of any clear idea about what information is intended to do, and for whom, this concentration on techniques is inevitable and in the case of management information systems it has been argued that:

'... most information systems have so far concentrated almost entirely

on the two words—information (or, possibly better, data) and systems. Compared with the immense efforts that have gone into codifying the data to be handled by a system and in designing the system, the effort devoted to ensuring the accurate collection and input of data and on the other hand making sure that the output produced for management is directly relevant to management's problems is trivial and this is precisely where many . . . systems have failed.'⁴

Over-zealous adherence to particular techniques and systems may be less spectacular in other information sectors but does, nevertheless, exist and similar criticisms could be applied to documentary information services and filing systems. The failure to develop any clear idea about the role of information and the relationships between its various tangible and intangible forms inevitably results in a situation in which different kinds of information handler see themselves not so much as satisfiers of information need but as people with specific organisational and manipulative skills related to particular kinds of information source. These attitudes naturally affect their approach to their work so that librarians, for example, may be more likely to consider the introduction of local government information services in terms of existing library expertise or the experience of other librarians than the needs of actual or potential information users. It is significant that the work which has been done on information needs in local government is almost entirely concerned with needs for particular kinds of information source regardless of the total information use pattern. Thus librarians have looked at the need for documented information among planners and social workers, and statisticians at the need for data without relating these needs to other kinds of information requirement.

The development of largely self-contained information 'empires' based on different kinds of information source and information handling expertise is evident in most local authorities and, as they invest more resources in this activity, the artificial barriers between empires may become more pronounced unless the various professions involved can relate their services to some overall view of the role of information in the organisation. In the meantime librarians, for instance, will continue to be thought of not as people with particular kinds of expertise to be applied to a wide range of information problems within an authority, but as people who deal with books and other published literature.

VARIETY OF INFORMATION SYSTEMS

The variety of information handlers within local government is matched by an equally confusing number of methods of storing and communicating information. Storage systems include computerised data-banks, archives, filing systems, personal files, libraries and the human memory.

An individual wishing to extract information from these stores is faced by a bewildering variety of retrieval systems, both formal and informal, which are frequently incompatible with each other and sometimes require the use of intermediaries who also vary in their ability or willingness to release information in the form required.

The formats in which information is presented in local government are also legion—computer print-out, visual displays, maps, models, tables of statistics, case records, procedural manuals, memoranda, reports to committee, etc., as well as the more conventionally printed book or journal. Much of it is documentary in form although the nature of the documents may vary considerably, particularly between internally and externally produced information sources. In some cases the form in which information is presented may enable the user to exploit the knowledge directly while in others it needs reworking in order to make it acceptable—detailed columns of statistics, for example, may mean little to a busy elected member who requires some simplification and narrative explanation before he can make use of the figures. The ‘intellectual accessibility’ of information is equally as important as its physical availability, and it is a frequent criticism of management information systems or committee reports that they present information in a form which is almost totally incomprehensible to the layman.

It is perhaps significant that the major kinds of information source in local government do not necessarily correspond to the different sorts of information expert outlined in the previous section. Librarians, for instance, are thought of as people who deal with documents and yet it is rare to find librarians involved with internal documentation except in a storage capacity. The development of classification schemes for the organisation and easy retrieval of information from documentary stores is central to professional librarianship and yet very few librarians have been involved in establishing efficient filing systems for departmental correspondence and other internal documents. It is slightly more usual to find them involved in the indexing of internal documentation, particularly minutes and agendas, but even this is rare. To be fair, this apparent inability to recognise areas where professional library expertise might be applied is not entirely the fault of local government—librarians themselves sometimes exhibit even narrower views on their professional limitations and it is hardly surprising that their potential contribution to solving information problems is so rarely appreciated.

The individual’s propensity to use any of the multitude of information stores available to him will depend on a variety of factors including the kind of job he does, his professional and educational background, the time available to him, the relevance of particular information stores to the problem in hand, the physical proximity of the store and the ease with which relevant information can be extracted from it. Perhaps the most important factors are his level of knowledge about what information

stores exist and their relevance to particular problems, and the importance he attaches to being 'well informed'. Information providers too often take it for granted that people wish to conduct their business, whether it be designing a new road or chairing the social services committee, on the basis of as much 'relevant' information as possible. Librarians in local government frequently argue that their job is to broaden the information 'base' of the authority so enabling officers and members to take more informed decisions for the benefit of the community.

This sounds eminently reasonable but it does involve two very large assumptions—that more information, however 'relevant', makes people better informed and that they take decisions on the basis of factual information. More information may simply confuse the decision-making process, particularly if the officer's or member's ability to absorb it is relatively limited, and decisions are frequently influenced by more immediately pressing issues than simple fact—personal ambition, party dogma, unavoidable external constraints, etc. etc. This does not mean that information is never influential in decision-making but it is important to keep it in perspective.

DOCUMENTARY INFORMATION SYSTEMS

Information flow within local government is, therefore, a complex phenomenon and the sources and systems outlined above are only indicative of the total picture. Documentary information is part of this picture, although an important and growing feature, and illustrates the fragmented approach to information handling in local government rather dramatically. For example, in a large county authority most of the following are likely to exist.

GENERAL LIBRARY/INFORMATION SERVICES

Usually based on the public library or, in metropolitan counties, a central department or section such as a research and intelligence unit. These services, designed to appeal to a wide range of officers and, possibly, members, normally provide broad based current awareness bulletins, enquiry answering services and, occasionally, selective dissemination of information in addition to conventional library facilities. In some cases these services have assumed a co-ordinating role in an attempt to rationalise other documentary information services in the authority but this role is rarely formally recognised in official policy.

DEPARTMENTAL LIBRARIES

Recognisable libraries consisting of a collection of documents and other media organised in a systematic way, housed in one place for the benefit of departmental officers and staffed by someone with specific responsibility for the service. The staff may be full- or part-time and, in some

cases, professionally qualified librarians, although this is rare. Experience shows that these libraries are most often located in departments of planning and architecture where officers are more likely to be acquainted with systematic information provision as a result of contact with the services provided by their professional bodies. In a few authorities staff are being seconded from public library based general information services to act as departmental librarians, although individual departments tend to retain control over such things as book budgets.

DOCUMENT COLLECTIONS

Many departmental 'libraries' are little more than a few shelves of material looked after part-time by a filing clerk. They may not be arranged in any systematic way and are often scattered around different offices so that documents are easily to hand for those who need them in their everyday work. Like the departmental library proper and the general information service, document collections tend to consist of externally published material such as basic reference works, a few reports and journals received by the department. Individually they may be quite insignificant but, taken together, they often amount to a sizeable collection of documents.

FILING SYSTEMS

These are immensely important within local government, and include a great deal of useful documented information such as internal departmental reports, memoranda, operational data, case work files, etc. In some cases departmental staff have control of centralised filing systems but in others these may be decentralised to area offices or site offices with little central co-ordination. Filing systems vary both within and between departments and there is rarely any attempt to link these kinds of internal information stores to systems covering externally produced material.

PUBLIC RELATIONS SECTIONS

These produce a wide variety of documented information for public consumption and may also provide information services, such as press cuttings, for senior officers and members. They usually occupy a strategic place in the internal and external communications system of the authority and, as such, are a useful contact point for sources of non-documented information.

COMMITTEE SERVICES SECTIONS

The production and circulation of council and committee documentation to officers and members is a crucial function in any authority and this kind of material forms an important part of its documentary output. Access to such documents is usually relatively easy in theory since they

are conventionally published, but distribution systems are often less than adequate and the retrospective retrieval of information from them may be extremely difficult. Indexing systems are usually crude and vary from committee to committee except in those few authorities where computerised or more efficient manual systems have been introduced. In some cases there may be no indexes to committee documentation and retrieval depends almost entirely on the good memory and length of service of individual committee clerks.

ARCHIVES AND MODERN RECORDS DEPARTMENTS

These are obviously important sources for the authority's own documentation, particularly its more formal records of business, and archives departments may also offer help to officers and members of the public wishing to find specific information. However, experience shows that the resources of such departments are often under-used from an information retrieval point of view and there is rarely much communication between archivists and information handlers.

MEMBERS' SECRETARIATS

These are becoming increasingly common since the Bains report on management in local government—which recommended improved secretarial and information support for members⁵—and they frequently provide basic information/research services in addition to typing facilities. Many also maintain confidential correspondence files for members on constituency and other matters.

RESEARCH AND STATISTICAL UNITS

The research activities of an authority may be organised on a departmental basis or in a central research and intelligence unit. These generate a good deal of statistical and documentary information and may also monitor other research activity in the authority through research registers and data inventories. In addition, they are also likely to maintain substantial collections of published and unpublished central government statistics and provide advisory services for other officers on statistical matters.

Documentary information handling in most authorities is, therefore, a highly fragmented activity in which different kinds of documents are handled in a wide variety of ways by different groups of people, including administrative officers, librarians, archivists, statisticians, corporate planners, filing clerks, journalists and clerical officers. The pattern may be extremely complex as, for example, in one county planning department where officers are provided with⁶:

a technical library run by a professionally qualified librarian who

provides an enquiry answering service and a regular acquisitions bulletin;

a general public library based service providing a daily press bulletin, a weekly journal abstracting bulletin and selective dissemination of information services;

a weekly local press bulletin and press releases from the public relations department;

a statistical library and a detailed information service based on the local press from the department's own Data and Monitoring Group.

In view of the known reluctance of most people to use information services, this authority seems in danger of stifling any interest by over provision. Increased interest in information services is to be welcomed but not if it results in the mushrooming of overlapping services to this extent.

The implications of fragmented documentary information handling will be discussed in more detail in a later chapter which will also look at how a more co-ordinated approach has been attempted in some authorities. The purpose of this chapter has been to show librarians in particular that they are not the only information handlers in the authority, that documents are only one source of information used by local government, and that differing attitudes to the role of information are likely to affect their relationships with other information handlers. It is essential that librarians develop a good network of contacts with other information handlers and an appreciation of a wide range of information problems if they are to provide services which meet the real needs of users rather than needs determined by the professional expertise of the librarian himself.

REFERENCES AND NOTES

- 1 LOCAL AUTHORITIES MANAGEMENT SERVICES AND COMPUTER COMMITTEE. *Information (what local governors need to know): interim report of the General Management Panel of LAMSAC*. LAMSAC, December 1976.
- 2 DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT and others. *General information system for planning*. HMSO, 1972.
- 3 LOCAL AUTHORITIES MANAGEMENT SERVICES AND COMPUTER COMMITTEE. *Filing and information retrieval through classification and coding*. LAMSAC, June 1976.

- 4 WOODCRAFT, G. *Hertfordshire County Council information systems—an R and I view*. In *Urban and Regional Information Systems: proceedings of Seminar C, Summer Annual Meeting, University of Warwick, July 1975*. Planning and Transport Research and Computation Company Ltd. (PTRC), 1975, pp 34-40.
- 5 DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT. *The new local authorities management and structure*. HMSO, 1972.
- 6 WHITE, P. 'Selling' qualitative information. *Burisa Newsletter*, July 1976, (23), pp 8-9.

Information Users and Their Needs

The success of any documentary information service is naturally dependent on its ability to match its services to the needs of its customers and, while this book is not strictly concerned with the detailed needs of users, it may be helpful to outline some of the work already done in this area. The relevance of such work to the real work of local government is sometimes questioned by information handlers who argue that circumstances have changed too much by the time studies are published to make them of much practical value and that the experience of one authority is rarely applicable elsewhere. There is a good deal of justification for these statements but this may be a reflection of the inadequacies of existing research methodologies rather than anything else.

All of the surveys described below have contributed to knowledge about information needs, but their impact on local government, as opposed to local government librarians, has, with a few exceptions, been minimal. One practical reason for this has been the lack of sufficient publicity in the local government media but it may also be due to the failure of local government to see the relevance of such work to real problems. It is certainly true that many local authorities exhibit an often extraordinary inability to recognise the importance of effective documentary information provision; extraordinary, that is, to librarians. This is no doubt partly due to simple ignorance about the possibilities offered by a properly organised information service, but it is also a result of the difficulties of relating academic research on information provision to real situations and problems in local government.

A considerable proportion of library based research on user needs in local government deals exclusively with published and semi-published information in books, journals and other sources and, while it is reasonable for librarians to be principally concerned with documentary information, these studies, which begin from the standpoint of a particular kind of information source, are already one step removed from reality.

The officer or member needs 'information', not books or journals or computer print-out, and a study which forces him to define needs in such an artificial way is likely to result in an incomplete and possibly biased picture which bears little relationship to the overall pattern of information use. These studies may well produce helpful information on, for example, the kinds of journals useful to planners or social workers, but they cannot say much about the relative importance of journals and other sources of information or how published sources fit into the wider information pool drawn on by users. Without this wider context such research is hardly likely to attract much notice outside the library profession.

Another possible reason for the limited impact of library research into user needs has already been mentioned—the failure to relate studies to the aims and objectives of local authorities. The problems of information need and provision are viewed almost entirely as technical matters, and information itself is seen as 'neutral' in the sense that library research rarely considers the role it is intended to play in the political and administrative structure of the authority. It is, of course, possible to discuss information provision simply as a technical issue of how to transmit information source A to information user B in the most efficient and effective manner possible, but one cannot look at information needs so dispassionately. The needs of both officers and members are inextricably bound up in the political and administrative structure of the authority, and research which is unable to relate its findings to this structure cannot have more than a minor impact. Unfortunately few librarians working in this area have considered the role of information in, for example, performance review or policy making and have studied needs without any firm idea of their derivation. As a result, their work may seem of limited value in the solution of real problems.

It is perhaps for this reason that nearly all library based studies to date have concentrated on the needs of 'middle management' officers working on specific projects or with otherwise well defined job boundaries. In these cases the political or organisational context of information need is less important than at higher levels, although still relevant, and information can be considered in some senses as neutral. However, as documentary services extend their coverage to senior and chief officers and elected members, it will become more and more necessary to develop methodologies to take account of these wider factors.

In the meantime, existing studies can provide some insight into documentary information needs and there is some evidence of a wider approach by both librarians and other local government researchers looking at information needs.

'TRADITIONAL' LIBRARY RESEARCH ON USER NEED

Both the British Library and the Library Association have financed work

on the documentary needs of officer groups, mainly planners and social workers, which looks principally at the need for library information and services. A study by Brenda White of the information requirements of planners in practice, teaching and research was published in 1970¹ and included an analysis of sources of information used in connection with both day-to-day work and fringe interests.

In the case of day-to-day work the most important sources proved to be internally generated survey data, maps and plans and government publications, with other sources of published information such as journals and theses coming well down the list. However, where information on fringe interests was concerned, libraries and library-type sources proved more important, with the periodical press figuring strongly. Hence the need for effective current awareness services to relieve planners of the impossible task of keeping up-to-date with a wide range of journals. However, contacts with colleagues in the organisation, and at conferences and meetings, also proved to be important as a method of keeping informed about practical developments; and there did seem to be a need for an additional current awareness facility to keep planners up-to-date on unpublished work.

The British Library funded work on the information needs of social workers as part of the INFROSS (Information Requirements of the Social Sciences) project based at Bath University in the early 1970s² and, while rather suspect on the grounds of sampling (only 28 people were interviewed, 17 of them probation officers), it does provide some useful information. It identified four major categories of information need: day-to-day information about individual clients and the local community; factual developments in legal, medical and other matters; information on practical developments in other authorities and organisations; and information arising from relevant research. The first two needs were met largely from experience, contact with colleagues and basic reference works, and the major problems appeared to lie in keeping up-to-date with research and practical developments. Like earlier studies on the reading habits of social workers,^{3,4} INFROSS found that this was not a popular activity and stressed the importance of improved methods of disseminating the results of current and recently completed social work research.

The DISISS (Design of Information Systems in the Social Sciences) project a few years later also looked at the information needs of social services personnel in a study of the *Staff digest* provided for Wiltshire Social Services Department⁵ to keep staff up-to-date on internal news and new publications. Like the INFROSS project, it also looked at information sources and the search strategies used, and found a similar pattern with personal contacts and office filing systems figuring much more strongly than libraries or conventionally published information. The major problems faced by personnel from the director down to clerical

staff were 'too much' information, the lack of efficient filing systems and the inability to acquire accurate information on demand. Among the recommendations was a proposal for a full time qualified information handler to act as a filter between the user and the mass of information available to him.

One practical outcome of the early work on information needs in the social services was the setting up of the Aslib Social Sciences Working Group on Social Welfare Information designed to bring librarians, researchers, academics and social workers together to discuss existing information services and recommend improvements where necessary.⁶

The Greater London Council's Intelligence Unit has also done some work on the need for technical information among local government officers in London.⁷ The survey covered a sample of planners, architects and valuers in four London boroughs. It consisted of an inventory of all public, special and institutional library service points in the area; a survey of the information requirements, defined in terms of needs for documented information, of the officers concerned; and an assessment of the extent to which those requirements were met by existing library services.

The survey does give some useful information on the kinds of published sources valued by these groups and the efficiency of various parts of the library system in providing them. However, its conclusions on user need are somewhat limited since the questionnaire was concerned solely with documented information (and often with named sources), so that it is difficult to relate the results to any overall view of information use or problems.

ACTION RESEARCH

In 1974 a research forum was held in Sheffield to assess research priorities in the social welfare field⁸ and, as a result, the British Library Research and Development Department has funded a total of four studies including two on user need.

One of these, based at Wiltshire County Council,⁹ is essentially an action research approach to the problem of assessing user need among personnel in the social services and probation departments. It recognises the disadvantages of using traditional questionnaire survey methods with groups that are not bibliographically oriented and intends to introduce active information services at an early stage in order to build up a picture of needs based on the actual provision of information. Some interviews will be carried out but they will concentrate on the tasks and problems of the respondents rather than on specific information needs as such.

STRUCTURED OBSERVATION

The second project resulting from the Sheffield forum is attempting to

overcome one of the major drawbacks of library user needs research mentioned earlier—its concentration on the need for one kind of information source in isolation. Project INISS (Information Needs and Services in Social Services Departments) is concerned to build up a complete picture of information communication, whether in written or spoken form, and only after this will it go on to consider the specific information problems of social services departments.¹⁰

Stage 1 of the project consisted of the 'structured observation' of 22 social services personnel at all levels in five departments during their day-to-day work; each communication 'event' was logged in detail to give information on the types of messages exchanged, their content and the medium used. A pilot study in Sheffield Social Services Department showed that this approach caused less disruption to normal work routines than other research methods (self-completion diaries, for example) and the team received full co-operation from its subjects even where confidential information exchanges were concerned.

The mass of data collected from this stage has been analysed in a variety of ways to show, for example, the average number of information exchanges occurring in encounters between the respondent and other people; the length of time of encounters; and the kinds of channels used (face-to-face contact, telephone, writing, etc.). The preliminary results show a remarkable similarity between authorities in the patterns of information exchange and give an enormous amount of data on the working day of a wide range of social services personnel.

Later stages of the project will involve the evaluation of the initial findings by interview and other means (not necessarily within the original departments), the assessment of existing departmental information systems,¹¹ and the introduction and evaluation of a number of experimental innovations for the improvement of services. Project INISS has also undertaken to monitor in detail the first twenty issues of a co-operatively produced abstracting service for social workers and this is discussed in a little more detail in a later chapter.

Apart from its obvious relevance to social services departments, this study also seems to have implications for the investigation of user need in other departments and, possibly, across departmental boundaries. The structured observation technique could well be used with other professional groups but, which is perhaps more important, the results already found by Project INISS could have immediate applications elsewhere. The researchers believe, for example, that the information use and acquisition patterns of senior officers and administrators vary little across departmental boundaries so that interview schedules developed from social services data could be adapted with very little extra work to other departmental officers.

From the standpoint of local government as a whole this study could provide vitally necessary knowledge about the information communica-

tion patterns within an organisation and, as such, it has implications outside the information handling world itself. Large organisations are in many ways the sum of a large number of different flows of information and improved knowledge about these flows could tell authorities a great deal about the efficiency or otherwise of their management structures.

INFORMATION NEED IN A POLITICAL AND ORGANISATIONAL CONTEXT

The investigation by the General Management Panel of the Local Authorities Management Services and Computer Committee (LAMSAC) into the information requirements of 'local governors'—defined as elected members, the chief executive and departmental chief officers—has already been mentioned.¹² Unlike the library based, user need studies, it places information need within a specific organisational structure and management system—corporate planning—with the aim of helping governors to 'identify needs, set objectives, establish plans and review achievements'. Within this framework it identifies the functions of information in a local authority as the guidance of specific services, perception of the authority's changing role, monitoring of performance, etc., and then discusses the specific needs of officers and members in each of these areas. Although this study has its limitations, it does take a great step towards reality by placing information need firmly in the real world of the corporately organised authority and setting down a number of basic principles about information provision, notably that policy planning, performance review and their supporting information are inextricably linked.

A study of policy making and political activity in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea in the early 1970s includes a detailed assessment of the factors affecting the information acquisition and use behaviour of elected members.¹³ It looks at the information sources used by councillors and the methods used to acquire information, and discusses in detail the psychological, political and other influences which lead them to seek out some sources and deliberately avoid others.

The findings show, for example, an overwhelming reliance on sources of information internal to the authority, a deliberate avoidance of information sources hostile to the *status quo*, including the press and pressure groups, a disinclination to listen to the views of constituents, and a tendency to develop 'exclusion devices' to justify a negative attitude towards information which conflicts with established views. These findings are, of course, peculiar to Kensington and Chelsea, but they do indicate the complexity of information needs and the importance of taking social, political and other intangible factors into account when dealing with any group of information users.

The LAMSAC study of local governors also covers elected members and illustrates their complex and overlapping roles in the organisation. It identifies six roles—policy maker, motivator and persuader, progress chaser, committee member, ward representative and party worker—and defines members' information needs in general terms.

'A requirement to have facts systematically accurate yet presented as a clear set of propositions or choices which readily stand out from other material.

Information on resources, needs and limitations to enable a member to argue his case at a variety of levels.

The means of knowing that work programmes are not getting behind by accident or design.

The ability to train himself and his colleagues to a high standard of excellence.'

These all present problems to the information handler and another commentator on members' information needs suggests that the problems will never be solved until local government gives up its 'naïve belief' in the neutrality of information.¹⁴ Local government is a political process and however a member's roles are defined they will be affected by political considerations. Authorities that ignore this avoid a basic fact of life with the result that:

'... we do not think about what our needs are, we simply try to twist the existing information that is easy to collect, to uses for which it was not designed, to suit groups who are perhaps less than crucial. We have to collect information for statutory purposes or for controlling the financial operation. We do not tend to collect information for the purposes of political control . . . Clearly we cannot collect or organise information until we know who wants it and for what purpose.'

OTHER VIEWS ON INFORMATION NEED

This chapter has only touched on some of the more substantial surveys of information need but many other people working in local government and information handling have expressed views. There is also a good deal of work going on within authorities to develop information systems, usually data oriented, which are designed to meet specific local needs.¹⁵ The bibliography which accompanies this review includes some of these comments and many of them are of particular interest because

they are made by information users themselves. In a world where information needs change so rapidly, this kind of 'feedback' is essential for information handlers and can often be of more value than the most sophisticated academic study.

ASSESSMENT OF USER NEED AT LOCAL LEVEL

To the average local government information handler the techniques for assessing need used in the projects described earlier are of little more than academic interest because he has neither the time nor the resources to apply them. Most public library based services, for example, claim to cater not only for all officers and members in their authorities but also outside organisations, other local authorities and, sometimes, the general public. In most cases they are staffed by fewer than three professional librarians, often working at a distance from all or some of their customers and usually with a limited initial knowledge of structures and personalities in the authority. Many of them have very little contact with officers and members beyond those few who are willing or able to come to the library.

It is not, of course, necessary for an information handler to be in close contact with every one of his potential customers in order to assess information needs. An experienced information officer can deduce needs fairly accurately from his general knowledge of developments inside and outside the authority and, to a certain extent, anyone with a reasonable grasp of local government structures and functions can select relevant material from the mass of literature available. Local government has such wide interests that the problem is rarely one of finding 'relevant' information but of knowing where to stop in selection. It is also likely that certain groups of user will have common needs and it is one of the more important functions of the information officer to make intelligent assumptions about the total potential market for a given piece of information; it is reasonable to suppose, for instance, that a fair proportion of social workers will be interested in baby battering, and that all chief officers and elected members will be eager to see the latest government pronouncement on the rate support grant.

The provision of a documentary information service of some kind to a local authority is not, therefore, a problem and the difficulties lie in ensuring that the information selected is directly relevant to the needs of officers and members. The volume of material available, even in the journal literature, is so great that any competent information handler can, for example, compile a regular current awareness bulletin and it is technically possible for him to do this, even with limited user contact, relying mainly on his own assessment of the kinds of information they need. Many of the less well developed services with limited staffs work largely on this basis and even some of the more sophisticated

examples show a remarkable faith in their own ability to judge unaided what is best for the user in the way of documented information.

The dangers of this one-sided approach to information provision are considerable. Local government officers and members are already exposed to a great deal of information from an enormous variety of sources, and one of the principal justifications for the appointment of professional information handlers is to help them in the almost impossible task of deciding which among these potentially relevant sources are the most suited to their needs. An information handler who has limited contact with users cannot possibly do this effectively and, as a result, his activities are inevitably based on his own assumptions about the relative importance of different kinds of information source, often based on the experience of other information handlers. The net result may well be that, far from helping users to decide between the relative merits of different kinds of information, these services simply add to the problem by pushing out yet more information without any idea of how, or even if, it is relevant to particular needs.

Many services would argue with some justification that they have insufficient resources to devote to the assessment of user need at individual or even group level, and it is lack of resources above all which leads most of them to opt for a standardised service, usually a current awareness bulletin, with broad appeal. In this way they can ensure that resources are spread over as wide a market as possible and while a bulletin may only serve part of a user's information needs, it is better than nothing. On the surface there is a good deal of sense in this argument; local government is still deprived of information from the outside world in the sense that, although it is 'available' in enormous quantities, it is rarely channelled towards those who need it, and any service which attempts to do this, however ineptly, is likely to prompt some favourable reaction. However, the introduction of a service which might possibly satisfy some unspecified need for current information is a poor justification for the appointment of often highly paid professional information handlers and is unlikely to meet with much approval in today's economically straitened local authorities.

If documentary information services are to survive and prosper, they must be able to demonstrate that they can serve real needs for information, not the needs expected by librarians or the needs which fit conveniently into the boundaries of their professional experience. If, as is likely, they have limited resources, there is an even greater justification for a careful assessment of users and the ranking of their needs so that the service can devote itself to priority areas.

It would be unfair to accuse all local government librarians of failing to appreciate the importance of assessing user need but in many cases the practical problems involved have led to almost complete inaction. The temptation simply to provide a service and see what happens can

be overwhelming and this approach has received some support in the professional literature. To an extent it is the only practical approach in that needs change constantly over time and no service can begin with a comprehensive picture of information requirements. Furthermore, some services have gone into operation quite deliberately on the basis of inadequate proof or definition of need, since an overt searching for such proof was thought likely to lead to condemnation in advance; services have thus gone ahead, quietly and unobtrusively, as an act of faith, without the provision of additional resources, in an effort to demonstrate that real user needs do exist and will reveal themselves in immediate response to the new service. However, this does not justify a strategy in which there is limited contact with users, no real attempt to assess needs, and no consistent monitoring of the service in relation to new developments. Without constant referral to the user, services cannot hope to maintain their relevance and will continue to develop almost solely on the basis of professional 'best practice' and the imitation of other, more established, services.

Imitation does, of course, have its place in the development of any new professional endeavour but there are dangers in an uncritical acceptance of techniques used elsewhere in entirely different settings. Why, for example, do nearly all local government information services concentrate on journal based, current awareness bulletins, often to the exclusion of almost any other service? Do they have any evidence that the journal is a more important source of information than other kinds of literature or that the need for current information is more pressing than the need for retrospective literature searches or other kinds of service? At a wider level, do they have any evidence that improving access to these externally published sources of information is more important than co-ordinating an authority's internal documentary information system?

The answer to most of these questions is probably that there is little if any hard evidence beyond the results of occasional statistical monitoring exercises which do little except indicate how well a bulletin is performing as a bulletin. As suggested earlier the concentration on current awareness is a good practical response to the problem of providing a service to a large number of people in the absence of sufficient resources, and it is reasonable to conclude that the addiction to journal based bulletins is partly a result of expediency. However, it is also difficult to ignore the fact that the earliest, and therefore most copied, local government information services were based on industrial library practice where journals figure strongly as an information source.

Development on the basis of expediency can hardly be condemned in a situation of limited resources, but its justification as professional 'best practice' can lead librarians into apparently ridiculous situations in which obvious or expressed information problems are ignored. To

take elected members as an example: there is widespread agreement among local government librarians that members face considerable problems in keeping abreast of their own authority's documentation, particularly minutes and committee reports, and this has been borne out by such studies of members as exist as well as by their own comments. As a result some services are trying to improve matters by providing indexes and other facilities, but others, including at least two specialised members' information units, are also providing them with journal based, current awareness bulletins and appear surprised at the low level of response to what appears to be useful information.

Given the member's existing heavy workload, which most librarians accept, and his likely preoccupation with strictly local matters, a bulletin which represents not only another piece of paper but also invites the recipient to read more is hardly likely to be well received except by a minority. A widely read member may be a better member than one who concentrates exclusively on local issues (although a lot of members might disagree), but it is naïve to assume a limitless ability to absorb information and counterproductive to add to the already considerable information problems experienced by this group.

The development of effective and practical methods of assessing user need is, therefore, essential if information services are to satisfy genuine needs in local government. At the most basic level this implies that librarians must be prepared to spend a considerable amount of time talking rather than doing, and if the nature of the service prevents them from making regular contacts outside the library, its bases may well need to be rethought. A gradual approach to the development of services by department or by groups of user in which information handlers can build up a sound knowledge of the needs of relatively limited 'markets' may be better than the immediate introduction of a 'comprehensive' service which claims to be all things to all men. At least one broad based information service has developed, and continues to develop, on these lines and this, together with other approaches to information provision, will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

Personal contact with individual information users or with 'gatekeepers' who can give insight into the needs of particular groups is the cornerstone of all successful services and essential to maintaining their relevance over time. The greater the degree of personal contact, the greater the response of information users to the service, because information provision in these circumstances is a two-way process based on a firm knowledge of both information needs and the part librarians or other information handlers can play in satisfying them. It is significant that librarians working in departments or with specific groups of customers, such as elected members, rarely mention the assessment of needs as a problem; the vaguest and most complex information need can usually be clarified if there is mutual trust between the information handler

and his customer and, although the problem may be difficult or even impossible to answer, there is at least no disagreement about its nature.

In addition to personal contact with users, there are other methods which can be used to keep up-to-date with likely information needs and monitor the effectiveness of services. Obvious examples include the following.

Regular scanning of abstracting and indexing services, the press, journals, council minutes and other material coming into the information unit to develop a good knowledge of professional and technical developments, national and local events and local authority policy decisions. This can help the information officer to predict likely issues of interest which could lead to requests for information and is the basis of his ability to act as the 'corporate memory' of his users.

Attendance at council and committee meetings to pick up inside knowledge on new developments with information implications. Most members' information officers try to attend at least part of the meetings of more important committees and in Hull they have responsibility for the microphone system in the chamber, an invaluable if somewhat time-consuming way of keeping up-to-date on trends.

Representation on officer working groups, management teams, etc., either as full members or as observers. This serves the same function as attendance at committee meetings but can often be difficult to achieve. Most authorities admit all officers as of right to the latter but officer meetings are often a closed shop. Departmental librarians may have a greater chance of admittance but their practical opportunities for attending meetings are often severely restricted by their workloads and lack of clerical assistance. Some librarians in this position are literally unable to leave their premises during working hours because there is no-one to supervise the library while they are gone.

Statistical monitoring of services, particularly current awareness bulletins, can provide useful background information on the impact of services provided it is carried out sensibly, but it is important to remember that such figures only relate to the service itself and cannot place it in an overall context of information need. Most services collect basic figures for internal management purposes such as counts of documents issued, enquiries, photocopies supplied, etc., but rarely have the time to analyse them any further. However, statistics of response to a broad based current awareness bulletin could be analysed on a sample basis by department or individual (to assess penetration of the market), by subject and by journal title. Enquiries can also be analysed by enquirer, subject, source of information (published, unpublished, statistical, documentary), fre-

quency of success in answering, etc., to provide data on the kinds of needs being expressed by users and the service's success in meeting them.

The difficulty with monitoring information of this kind is that it is time-consuming both to collect and analyse, and that it relates only to expressed information needs. Response to a bulletin, for example, indicates very little beyond the fact that certain kinds of people are asking for certain kinds of documents; it says nothing about their needs for other kinds of information, particularly those which may be difficult to articulate, and gives no indication about how, or even if, the information provided by the bulletin is useful in solving problems. Similarly statistics of enquiries can only relate to the enquiries which people actually bring to the library and say nothing about the host of other information problems which might benefit from library expertise if the individual only realised its scope. Project INISS, as indicated earlier, is currently assessing the response to the co-operatively produced *Social Work Information Bulletin* and may come up with fresh suggestions on the role of statistical monitoring in local government information services. But, in the meantime, most services are likely to restrict their activities in this area on the grounds that the information gained is not worth the time and effort to collect.

Questionnaire surveys are a standard technique used in library based studies of information need, but are usually beyond the scope of individual services except in the context of small scale opinion surveys. As a technique they have also fallen into some disrepute as a method of assessing user need because of the difficulty faced by many people in local government in expressing their information requirements. This is a major reason behind the Project INISS approach to assessment which relies mainly on deduction based on detailed descriptions of how officers actually seek, receive and use information in their day-to-day work. The Wiltshire project on social welfare information also accepts the inadequacies of conventional questionnaire and interview techniques with respondents who are not bibliographically oriented.

At local level, therefore, the assessment of user need is largely a question of maintaining close contact with users on either an individual or group basis and on the intelligent interpretation of published and semi-published sources of information. In view of the complex and rapidly changing nature of information needs, it is unlikely that more formal techniques will be able to replace such methods completely, and this has considerable implications for the strategies adopted by public libraries and other departments contemplating the introduction of services. These will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, but in broad terms the lesson seems to be that small scale services catering

for limited groups of users and located near to them have a greater chance of success in assessing and meeting real information needs than a broad based and possibly remote service that has limited contact with users.

REFERENCES AND NOTES

- 1 WHITE, B. *Planners and information*. Library Association, 1970. (Library Association Research Publication No.3.)
- 2 BATH UNIVERSITY LIBRARY. *Investigation into the information requirements of the social sciences; the information needs of social workers*. Bath University Library, 1971. (INFROSS Research Report No.4.)
- 3 McCULLOCH, H.W. and BROWN, M.J. A national social work interdisciplinary study of reading behaviour and helpful factors in professional practice. *Clearing house for local authority social services research*, December, 1975, (12), pp 55-80. (A study carried out in 1969 but not published at that time.)
- 4 CLARK, A. and SCOTT, N.L. *Information use: a professional strategy*. Tavistock Institute of Human Relations, 1974.
- 5 BATH UNIVERSITY LIBRARY. *Design of information systems in the social sciences. User evaluation of an information service in social welfare; report of an interview and questionnaire study of the Wiltshire Social Services Staff Digest*. Bath University Library, 1973. (Research Reports: Series B No.1.)
- 6 WEBLEY, M. The Aslib Social Sciences Working Group on Social Welfare Information; a review of its development and current activities. *Aslib Proceedings*, June/July 1976, 28(6/7), pp 243-247.
- 7 PRATT, G.E.C. and FERGUSON, H.A. A study of the information needs of London's local government officers. *Greater London Council Research Memorandum* 433, 1973.
- 8 MANN, M.G. and WILSON, T.D. *Forum on social welfare library information research, Hallam Tower Hotel, Sheffield, 28-30 June 1974: report of proceedings together with background papers presented for the forum*. University of Sheffield Postgraduate School of Librarianship and Information Science, 1974. (OSTI Report 5219).
- 9 INFORMATION systems in two statutory welfare agencies. Three-year research project financed by the British Library research and development department and based on Wiltshire County Council. Contact: Mr. W. Blake, Wiltshire CC Social Services Dept., County Hall, Bythesea Road, Trowbridge, Wiltshire BA14 8LE.
- 10 PROJECT INISS. Based at the University of Sheffield Postgraduate School of Librarianship and Information Science, Western Bank, Sheffield S10 2TN. Project head: Dr T.D. Wilson, Principal Investigator: Mr D. Streatfield. Project INISS publishes research notes on progress from time to time, some of which are available generally, and also produces a newsletter.

- 11 WILSON, T.D. and DUNN, A.C. Library/information services in local authority social services department; results of two surveys. *Journal of Librarianship*, July 1976, 8(3), pp 166-174. (Describes the results of a pilot study carried out in connection with the Sheffield Forum on social welfare information research.)
- 12 LOCAL AUTHORITIES MANAGEMENT SERVICES AND COMPUTER COMMITTEE. *Information (what local governors need to know); interim report of the General Management Panel of LAMSAC*. LAMSAC, 1976.
- 13 DEARLOVE, J. *Politics of policy in local government; the making and maintenance of public policy in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea*. (Particularly Chapter 9). Cambridge University Press, 1973.
- 14 YOUNG, R. *The role of the library in information services—1. the politics of information*. In: Peebles 1976 proceedings of the 62nd annual conference of the Scottish Library Association, 24-27 May 1976. The role of the library in a changing society, edited by A.G.D. White. SLA, 1976, pp 38-45.
- 15 A useful source of information on such projects is the Department of the Environment's annually published four volume *Register of research* supplemented by *Research and surveys* 1975 and 1976 which cover projects not meeting the criteria for inclusion in the main register.

The Development of Documentary Information Services

How have documentary services in local government developed and how, in particular, have librarians reacted to the difficulties involved?

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

In spite of their considerable problems in dealing with documentary information, it is only recently that local authorities have accepted the need for a more coherent policy in this area, and it is difficult to escape the conclusion that this is partly the fault of the library profession. Although many different people are involved in the practice of documentary information handling, it falls most neatly within the scope of professional librarians and information scientists and their failure to impress on local government the need for professional expertise in this area is a major reason behind the late development of properly organised information services.

Aslib has expressed interest in the information needs of local government in recent years through the establishment of specialised groups like the Aslib Transport and Planning Group, which has organised several conferences on local government subjects,¹ and the Social Sciences Working Group on Social Welfare Information. The Institute of Information Scientists, on the other hand, has shown relatively little interest in this area in spite of the close relationship between the type of information service provided in local government and the world of industry and commerce. However, there is some evidence of a change in attitude with discussion of local government information services at the Institute's annual conference in 1977, and a move to involve it more closely in this aspect of information work.²

Compared with Aslib and the IIS, the Library Association has a long history of interest in local government beginning as early as 1917 when a resolution was adopted by the 40th annual conference to the effect that:

‘Collections of books and other printed manuscript matter bearing upon . . . questions of local government should be established in connection with . . . municipalities; such collections to be effective must be in charge of a trained librarian; the management of such collections should be placed under the Library Committee; the cost of such libraries will be small in proportion to the valuable part they will play in serving the needs, not only of officials entrusted with carrying out public work, but also of members of the municipality responsible for local government finance and policy.’³

However, it was not until the 1960s that public libraries, an integral part of local government, began to introduce services for their colleagues in other departments. Bulletins were introduced in Gateshead in 1962,⁴ Wandsworth in 1963, Essex, Newcastle and Bradford in 1965, and Hull in 1966. The first co-operatively produced abstracting service for local government, *LOGA*,⁵ started in 1966 and separate local government information services were set up in a few authorities including Liverpool (in 1964).

The profession itself also showed a revival of interest, and the needs of local government were noted in the 1970 Standards for Reference Services in Public Libraries⁶ and in the Public Libraries Research Group’s *Aims and objectives* document two years later.⁷ However, actual progress has been slow and a more detailed assessment of the staffing and other implications of local government information services was not published until 1976.⁸ Even this statement claims to be provisional and recommends more research before firm guidelines can be given.

The failure of the Library Association to take a firm stand one way or the other on local government information services may well have contributed in part to the difficulties faced by many public libraries in the field today. Its comments on the Bains Committee deliberations were not issued until after the publication of the final report,⁹ for example, and this is probably one of the reasons behind Bains’ almost complete silence on the need for documentary information services, particularly among officers.

The main impetus for the development of services undoubtedly came from an authority without public library powers, the Greater London Council, whose research library services were largely modelled on techniques most commonly found in industrial and commercial library contexts. Public libraries, although an inseparable part of local government and perhaps the most obvious location for documentary information services, made very little contribution to professional thinking on this aspect of information handling in the early days, and even now their approach tends to be one of imitation rather than innovation. The most interesting developments still occur in services based outside the public library system with a few notable exceptions.

This is, of course, partly due to a lack of resources in an economic climate which has hit public libraries particularly hard, but this argument is less convincing when applied to the years immediately before local government reorganisation when one might have expected them to be thinking about its information implications. Public libraries like all sectors of local government have to make choices about the allocation of resources to this aspect of the service or that, but there is little evidence to show that local government information was ever seriously considered except by a few more forward looking public libraries.

One reason behind this apparently inexplicable failure to take notice of the information needs of its parent organisation is the 'independent' stance of public libraries which are in local government but not really of it. Librarians generally have limited contact with other officers in local government, partly because they are often physically separate from the main office complex of the authority but also because of the tradition of 'public' service which has placed a low priority on the development of contacts with the authority except at fairly senior level. As a result, the junior or middle management librarian put in charge of a local government information service may have very little idea of what is going on in the authority and a limited appreciation of its structure and personalities. At the same time his potential customers probably have a misplaced view of the role of librarians and few are likely to see the public library as a source of useful information. This can make the introduction and development of services extremely difficult in the early stages while these attitudes persist.

However, it is the attitudes of public librarians themselves which are likely to be the biggest stumbling block. Brenda White in her survey of planning information needs in the late 1960s found that of the few chief librarians she interviewed, most felt that the public library service was for the benefit of the general public and that no one section was entitled to special treatment as of right.¹⁰ This seems rather at odds with the long established tradition of services to prisons, hospitals, industry, commerce and other special community groups. With such conflicting attitudes in mind it is important to stress that without the wholehearted support of senior management, the people who actually provide services may find their job doubly difficult, and a number of local government librarians quote this as a problem.

The public library's tradition of 'passive' service is also likely to affect its success in providing services to local government. These must be positive and out-going if they are to be successful, and in many ways this approach is in direct contrast to public library attitudes, even today. Until recently very few public librarians saw themselves in an information role except in the somewhat limited sense of providing a public reference service. The main purpose of public libraries was considered to be the collection, organisation and storage of documents for the benefit of

those members of the community who were willing and able to come to the library. It was not the exploitation of documents for those who wanted information and even today public libraries tend to be very much self-help services.

As a result the public library service rarely attracts those librarians who are 'information minded', and it is significant that at least one public library based service regards itself as fortunate in being able to recruit departmental information staff from the special library sector. Indeed, the attitudes required in a local government information officer are much more those of the special than the public librarian which probably accounts for the important role played by the former in the development of thinking about this aspect of information work.

IMPLICATIONS

The failure of librarians to respond to the documentary information needs of local government is one reason behind the fragmented nature of information handling in most authorities. They have been left to identify and meet their documentary problems largely unaided and, in the absence of professional advice, it is hardly surprising that their response has been patchy and uncoordinated. Public libraries arriving late on the scene are faced with a bewildering range of services of widely varying sophistication which have to be welded into some kind of coherent whole before any real progress can be made, and their efforts to do this are often hampered by local government's limited appreciation of the importance and potential role of documentary information.

In those authorities without library powers, notably the metropolitan county councils, the situation may be marginally better. In these cases responsibility for documentary information services has generally been assumed by central research and intelligence (R and I) units, and because of their position in the local authority structure they are often better able to assess and meet information needs than the peripherally located public library. Perhaps more important, R and I units, by virtue of their role in providing statistical and other kinds of information, are often able to see the needs for documents in a wider context of information provision and have the advantage of an existing reputation as creators and disseminators of information.

However, the failure of the library profession to impress on local government the need for effective documentary information services means that few R and I units have a specific responsibility for them and, like public libraries, they have tended to assume such functions as and when they are able. It may be true that they are better placed in the administrative structure to do this but they still have to operate in a situation of fragmented documentary information provision and face exactly the same problems in creating some kind of co-ordinated

approach. In addition, their efforts may also be hampered by a conflict of views on the proper role of units which were conceived largely in terms of statistical, not documentary, information. At least one R and I unit has had its activities curtailed on the grounds that libraries are not a suitable interest for a statistical unit.

CURRENT EXTENT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT INFORMATION SERVICES

There has been no national survey of the numbers of authorities providing information services, although the Library Association did undertake one a few years ago in connection with a proposed meeting with the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE); unfortunately the survey was never published and its results remain obscure. This book is based on the experiences and views of a number of the more interesting local government information services but the 'sample' is not representative in the strict statistical sense.

However, the general picture is of expansion in information services across the country since local government reorganisation with public libraries taking a much larger role than previously. However, the activities of all organisations in this field are suffering to some extent from the lack of funds resulting from the economic difficulties of local government. The majority of English county councils now benefit from some kind of service provided by a public library or R and I unit, but at lower levels the provision is much more patchy. County services are sometimes available at district level but the geographical separation of users from providers means that services tend to be at a fairly low level. It is also likely that district needs vary quite considerably from those at county level in the sense that there is an even greater emphasis on purely parochial issues and internal information sources which public libraries are ill equipped to deal with at the moment.

The vast majority of rural and semi-urban districts have no documentary information service of any kind at authority level although some may have well developed services in particular departments. The larger urban districts and boroughs in the metropolitan counties (Hull, Newcastle, Birmingham, Sheffield, Liverpool, Leeds, etc.) are more likely to benefit from services although even here there are surprising gaps. Several of the London boroughs also have their own services although there is still a tendency to fall back on the Greater London Council for information which could quite easily be provided from local resources.

In Wales and Scotland local government information services are fairly thin on the ground. In the former, public libraries seem to have faced particularly severe problems on reorganisation and few have made much headway in information provision although there is interest among

librarians. One of the best developed services is run by an R and I unit with a librarian seconded from the public library. In Scotland, where reorganisation occurred a year later than in England, it is rare to find any developed services even at regional council level. The Lothian Regional Council has a number of departmental libraries and a fairly sophisticated members' information service, while the largest authority, Strathclyde, has only recently finalised its plans for a council-wide service. At district level there are services in Renfrew¹¹ and Falkirk but virtually nowhere else.

In numerical terms there is obviously a far greater number of departmental libraries than general information services and they are spread more evenly around the country. However, many of these services are extremely crude and tend to be concentrated in particular kinds of department, notably planning and architecture and, to a growing extent, social services.

Brenda White's most recent research project based in Edinburgh¹² revealed that, at the end of 1972, 96 of the 233 planning authorities in England, Wales and Scotland had recognisable libraries and many others no doubt had document collections of one kind or another dignified by the name of library. A survey carried out in 1971 by Nottinghamshire County Planning Department of a sample of 45 authorities gives some idea of the services available at that date,¹³ and there is no doubt that more have been introduced since then.

The only area where there has been any attempt at a national assessment of the extent of information services is in the social welfare field. A survey was carried out in association with the forum on research in social welfare library and information systems held in Sheffield in 1974¹⁴ — subsequently updated and expanded by another survey later in the same year of a section of the original respondents.¹⁵ It covered 119 social services departments in the metropolitan districts, non-metropolitan counties, Northern Ireland Area Boards and London boroughs with a response rate of 58 per cent to the first survey. It is impossible to draw hard and fast conclusions about the numbers of departmental library or information services which exist since the surveys did not begin with a strict definition of such a service. They were more concerned with the kinds of information handling activities carried out in such departments and with people involved in them than with identifying bona fide libraries.

BACKGROUND TO INFORMATION SERVICE DEVELOPMENT

Before going on to look at the particular strategies adopted by various authorities in the development of information services it may be worth repeating some of the more basic considerations to be taken into account.

Information needs in local government are highly complex and can change rapidly making assessment and monitoring difficult even on the basis of close personal contact between information handler and user.

Many different kinds of information source and communications media are used within local government. Documents are only one source although an important and expanding one.

Information is rarely considered as a corporate resource although there is evidence of a change in attitude, for example, in the development of computer based management information systems designed to support the corporate planning process. However, these systems are usually confined to data and there appears to be a general under-valuing of 'soft' information including that contained in documents.¹⁶

As a result, documentary information handling is accorded relatively low priority in most authorities and is extremely fragmented. Many different kinds of people are involved, often with little or no specific training and with differing attitudes towards the information they hold. Information services have tended to develop on an *ad hoc* departmental basis and there is rarely any specific allocation of responsibility to one department or section for the co-ordination and development of documentary information services on a council-wide basis. These functions tend to be assumed by public libraries or central departments and may be recognised as an integral part of their role only after some considerable time.

The experience of authorities already providing general information services to a wide range of customer groups shows two main methods of approach.

1. THE CENTRALISED, COMPREHENSIVE INFORMATION SERVICE

This suggests the development of a service catering for elected members, all departments and, possibly, outside organisations as well and implies the disappearance of departmental libraries as independent agencies and the incorporation of some or all of the resources released in a central organisation.

A solution along these lines has much to recommend it in terms of administrative efficiency and is favoured by a number of librarians in local government. The management of staff, stock and finance is simplified and the development of a balanced approach to documentary information provision within the authority is easier, in theory, if a central organisation is given powers to do it. At county level it is also likely that a centralised service, by virtue of its size and command over resources, would be able to take advantage of more sophisticated methods such

as computerised information storage and retrieval and to diversify its output. On a less tangible level, information officers working in such a service would benefit from closer contact with colleagues working in different disciplines.

An administratively centralised service of this kind does not necessarily imply physical centralisation. 'Branch libraries' may well be established in departments which are remote from the main civic complex or which have specialist requirements distinct from the main stream of information need. In view of the geographical scatter of departments in many post-reorganisation authorities such a pattern may well be essential and, in any case, there are strong arguments in favour of information handlers being sited as near to their customer groups as possible. The degree of decentralisation would naturally vary with the size of the authority, its geographical disposition and the nature of information need. In all cases the advantages of close contact with the user should not be allowed to obscure the fact that information need cannot be classified on purely departmental grounds, and that it may well be to the advantage of customers if, for example, services to planners, surveyors and engineers are run in tandem by information handlers in close daily contact.

There is, however, a greater risk of failure in centralised services if they are under-staffed, and some local government librarians commented on the unhelpfulness of the LAMSAC guidelines for staffing centralised services. But in an ideal world the development of a strong centralised documentary information service with departmental service points, where appropriate, would seem to be the most logical method of approach. The beginnings of such developments can be seen in a few public library systems which have the resources to second staff to departments, and in recent developments in the Greater London Council.

Cheshire County Council

Cheshire's local government information service, based on the county library, began in September 1972 and provides services for county council officers and members (the latter to a limited extent only), district councils, outside organisations such as architectural and planning practices, and the general public. It is under the control of a Principal Librarian (Information) and has a total of six professional information officers, one of whom is employed full time to monitor and maintain a network of public information points, and five clerical staff.

Although Cheshire's services have always been available on a council-wide basis through an enquiry service and generalised current awareness bulletins such as *Today's Press* and *Parliamentary Review*, the county library's strategy has always been one of the step-by-step introduction of services to individual departments as resources and circumstances permit. This selective approach became even more evident with the splitting of Cheshire's general journal based bulletin, *Current Literature*,

into a series of smaller and more frequent subject based services designed for specific user groups.

The service began, at least in part, at the instigation of the Director of Social Services who decided in the pre-reorganisation period that his department needed ready access to a wide range of professional and related literature both for day-to-day working purposes and to enable staff to keep up-to-date on relevant research and developments. He also felt that there was a close relationship between planning and social services information needs and that a joint approach to services would be appropriate. The planning department already possessed a small library under the control of a chartered librarian, but, like social services, believed that needs could best be met by a more positive approach involving the exploitation of information as well as the simple collection and organisation of documents.

It is significant that both departments recognised a need for professionally qualified information handlers right from the start and the county library was involved at an early stage. The service was set up in 1972 to serve the two departments and staffed by a public librarian and a clerical officer working in close physical proximity to their customers. However, the library's terms of reference extended beyond the parent departments even in the early days, with plans to develop a central catalogue of resources in all county council departmental libraries, and the introduction of broad based press and journal bulletins.

In 1975 a public library based service for the architects department was introduced as part of the existing information service network and staffed by a qualified librarian recruited and employed by the public library on secondment. Again the service is sited close to the main customer group and was developed jointly by the two departments, the architects' department being responsible for accommodation and furnishing, typing and reprographic facilities and clerical staff.

The latest move has taken the broad based aspects of the service (daily press bulletin and other general current awareness services, liaison with the rest of the public library system, union catalogue of county council libraries, maintenance of the information service network and public information service, etc.) to a new location in county hall. Specialised services are also being developed for the County Secretary's department, Treasurer's department, elected members and the education department, all of which are sited in the same building. The continued development of specialised services to departments is evident in the introduction of a current awareness bulletin for the education department and a public library commitment to organise and supervise the department's existing document collection.

There are, of course, other departmental information services in Cheshire which are not provided by the public library and in present economic circumstances it seems unlikely that the network will be exten-

ded much further in the near future. The education department service, for example, has had to be accommodated within existing resources and there is a limit to the public library's ability to provide specialised services without some input from client departments. However, there does seem to be considerable scope for the development of the network along the lines already taken. The Surveyor's department, for example, has a small library, under the control of an unqualified member of staff, which might well benefit from a closer relationship with the public library. However, it is sited outside Chester and progress beyond informal co-operation is difficult.

Unique approach to provision of documentary information. Cheshire's success in developing a coherent approach to documentary information provision is almost unique among public libraries and can be attributed to several factors, including an initial appreciation of the potential role of public libraries in providing departmental information services which ensured close library involvement from an early stage. This was undoubtedly partly due to the departmental chief officers involved, who appeared to be unusually 'library minded', but also to the degree of commitment expressed by the County Librarian who was willing to make resources and expertise available. It is essential for the successful development of information services that they have the full backing of senior management and that the County Librarian has sufficient standing among his colleagues to make his views heard and accepted. A half-hearted approach is unlikely to bear much fruit in an area where it is so difficult to justify expenditure in simple economic terms and where the full benefits of a service cannot be judged until it has been in operation for some time.

Cheshire has also maintained a firm policy of close involvement with information users in which information staff are sited near to their customers and encouraged to develop contacts with them wherever possible. Accommodation close to users is another essential factor in the successful development of services and Cheshire was particularly lucky in acquiring this early on. Most public library based services find it extremely difficult to get a foothold in the town or county hall and this is one of the reasons behind their inability to develop services beyond a fairly crude level.

However, Cheshire has maximised its chances of acquiring good accommodation by concentrating on those departments that are already information minded in the sense that they have a departmental library of sorts and will respond to suggestions for improved information services at local level. As a general rule it is better to begin with departments which have already requested help or are likely to respond well to an offer than to opt for those that appear to have the most severe problems, or to try and serve everyone. In the Cheshire case one might argue that the public library effectively wasted resources in the development of

services to the planning department which already had a professional information officer, and that it would have done better to concentrate on departments with no service at all. This may appeal to the librarian's evangelical instincts but it is not normally a sensible or practical proposition in local government.

If, as seems likely, close physical proximity to users is important in information provision, the development of services inevitably requires some input of resources from client departments and, without this, the library will never be able to provide more than current awareness bulletins and, possibly, a telephone enquiry service. However, departments are hardly likely to give up valuable space and equipment unless they are able to appreciate the potential benefits of an information service, hence the importance of concentrating on departments which already recognise an information need regardless of whether their problems are more or less severe than those of other departments. In the absence of any 'statutory' remit to provide information the public library based service is judged entirely by results, and it is far more likely to succeed if it starts operations in congenial surroundings.

The initial service, in Cheshire's case to planning and social services, can then act as a blueprint for other departments which may be better able to assess their own information needs against a background of an active service provided to colleagues. Their expectations of what a public library can do for them are also likely to be higher if they see a successful service in operation, and this will provide a firm basis for the further development of the service in which new client departments will regard the input of necessary resources as an integral part of the process.

Importance of attracting other resources. The ability to attract resources from client departments is extremely important in the development of services during a period of financial restraint. Accommodation at local level, as noted above, is essential for the development of a full and responsive service, but other resources can also be forthcoming if the public library works closely with potential client departments. Staff is one obvious example, and this is another good reason for concentrating initially on departments that have already gone some way towards providing services. In the Cheshire case, the original staff allocation for the whole local government service was one librarian and one clerical officer from the public library establishment, and its subsequent expansion is due at least in part to the ability of the public library to acquire staff from departments. The planning department's librarian post was taken over, for example, as was a similar post in the architects' department, and the public library now recruits and employs these staff directly. On the clerical side staff are sometimes provided by the departments themselves; the architects' department, for example, provides a full time clerical officer and a retired architect as part of its contribution to the

information service.

The contribution of hard cash from departments to a public library based information service is rare, and Cheshire is almost unique in receiving contributions from the departments of planning, social services and architects. In most authorities the public library is left to bear the cost of an information service from its own resources, despite the fact that it should be classed as a common service along with computing facilities and other such services. The Library Association in its comments on the Bains Report argued that information services should be financed on a recharge basis but, in the absence of any response to this plea, finance is very much dependent on local arrangements worked out on an *ad hoc* basis.

Finally, Cheshire's success can be partly attributed to the basic philosophy of the service which ensures that new commitments are not undertaken until adequate resources are available either from within the public library system or as a result of negotiations with potential customers. In this way the quality of the service has not been diluted as the number of client departments increases, and Cheshire has avoided the difficulties of other authorities who have over-extended themselves in an impossible attempt to be all things to all men. Above all it has maintained close contact with the users of information and has thus retained its ability to be responsive to needs even with the considerable expansion of the last five years.

Greater London Council

The GLC is in many ways unique among local authorities and its documentary information services reflect this. It contains a large number of departmental libraries and information units, some very substantial in terms of stock and staff and well established over a period of years.¹⁷ The Department of Architecture and Civic Design's library, ACCESS, has a stock of nearly 30,000 books and pamphlets and 280 journal titles, while the Inner London Education Authority's education library contains approximately 300,000 books and provides services to all ILEA teaching staff and schools. Others, such as the two libraries in the legal and parliamentary department, are smaller but still substantial when compared with most departmental libraries in other authorities.

Of the 30 or so libraries and information points within the GLC only one, the research library, has a council-wide function. Established in 1969, it is part of the Intelligence Division of the Policy Studies and Intelligence Branch in the Director General's department and thus occupies a place in the centre of the authority's structure. Throughout its development the research library has been committed to the positive dissemination of information and has built up a wide range of current awareness bulletins and other services to ensure that officers and members are well-informed on developments affecting London and its surrounding region. Unlike

Cheshire, the GLC's current awareness bulletins tend to be general in scope, even where journal material is concerned, and are designed to cut across departmental boundaries; but the information needs of specific departments are also served through the enquiry answering service. The aim is to concentrate on the needs of groups who are not well served by departmental libraries and thus fill gaps in the existing network of information provision.¹⁸

Until recently contact with departmental libraries was maintained largely on an informal basis by day-to-day contact with information staff supplemented by the occasional meeting to review progress. However, there is evidence of duplication of stock and functions, and concern at the likely waste of resources was expressed in a report to the General Purposes Committee and General Services Management Board in 1976.¹⁹ A working party was set up to look at the rationalisation of library services within the Director General's department and it isolates two specific areas of information need—the need for historical and topographical information on London's past and the need for current information on all subjects relating to local government in London.

The report recommends that the research library should be made responsible for providing current information on a council-wide basis and outlined the immediate implications for libraries in the Director General's department. As a result the scientific library serving the scientific branch of the department was incorporated into the research library organisation in April 1976. Its staff are now *de facto* part of the research library establishment and its stock is included on the ACOMPLIS database although it has not been absorbed physically. The ordering and processing of stock is done centrally and should soon be covered by the research library's computerised loans system.

Secondly, the council's library, a large collection of documents on London's history and topography as well as more general up to date material on local government, has been renamed the Greater London History Library and given a specifically historical function. A considerable amount of its more current stock has now been transferred to the research library thus removing a major area of stock duplication in the Director General's department.

Rationalisation of other departmental libraries in the GLC is obviously a long term objective but the report states that 'if the principle (of the research library's new role) is accepted, it would be for other libraries to justify their independent existence'. In the meantime it is suggested that the research library begin to establish a central record of all documents available in the GLC's departmental libraries using its computer-based information storage and retrieval system, ACOMPLIS.

Attempts to use ACOMPLIS as a means of promoting some rationalisation between libraries had been made before the report but were given extra impetus by this recommendation. Libraries in the departments

of valuation and estates and mechanical engineering have been provided with computer-produced indexes of the complete database, but so far they have not contributed details of their own material, unlike the Treasurer's department library which has been incorporated into both the database and the research library ordering system. Requests for help have been received from a number of the smaller departmental libraries, including the staff training centre library and the fire brigade, and the former was incorporated into the research library organisation. Approaches to other departments, such as housing, and architecture and civic design, with a view to including library stocks in the database have met with mixed results, although it does appear to be accepted at the highest level that rationalisation is necessary.

The GLC, therefore, provides the most striking example of an authority attempting to develop a corporate approach to documentary information provision by giving powers to a centrally located agency. Indeed, the picture seems to be one of forced rationalisation at a pace which is often too rapid for comfort. At the moment efforts are limited to the control of stock through the inclusion of departmental library holdings in the ACOMPLIS system and the centralisation of stock ordering and processing. This is reflected in the rapid expansion of 'library' type activities as opposed to pure information work.

The research library's stock, for example, has increased to about 15,000 books, pamphlets and reports, about 600 journal titles, 400 statistical serials, 10,000 microfiches and 7,000 slides. The volume of loans has increased to the point where it has proved worthwhile to introduce a computer controlled system and the number of registered borrowers is over 1,000. ACOMPLIS is gradually changing from an urban affairs database to a GLC central information store as the stocks of various libraries are added; this is causing difficulties of language control as well as increasing the volume of work.

However, with the exception of the scientific library which contributed two professional staff and its book-fund, all these developments have been achieved without any extra money or staff, although there has been some additional space allocation. The absence of extra money appears to be a fairly minor consideration at the moment since the libraries incorporated into the system are all relatively small, with book-funds of only a few hundred pounds. However, the lack of extra staff, particularly on the clerical side, is proving to be a problem because of the increase in ordering, processing and stock maintenance activities.

The major difficulty, apart from resource limitations, in developing a council-wide network of libraries and information units in the GLC seems to be residual opposition from departments with already well established services, and this is likely to affect similar attempts in other authorities. In spite of a high level directive to the effect that it is 'for other libraries to justify their independent existence' actual progress

on rationalisation depends on delicate inter-departmental negotiations and substantial units are unlikely to give up their independence without a struggle. Departmentalism and fears of 'empire building' are still rife in most local authorities in spite of the introduction of corporate management and many departments still prefer to go their own way in information provision.

In the GLC case, for example, approaches to the housing department libraries to include their stocks on the ACOMPLIS database have met with little response and the department has appointed its own information officers (non-librarians) in the last year without any reference to an overall strategy of information provision. Independent action is still evident even in the Director General's department with the recent appointment outside the main information system of an officer to monitor EEC legislation and other documentation.

Developments elsewhere

In present circumstances the development of a comprehensive documentary information service seems little more than a pipe-dream to most other authorities, although a number have plans for such a service in the future when improved accommodation becomes available in new civic or county complexes. However, in most cases these plans are a long way from realisation and, in the meantime, public libraries and research and intelligence units need to find other ways of ensuring the effective provision of information on a council-wide basis.

2. THE FEDERAL OR CO-ORDINATED INFORMATION SERVICE

The alternative adopted by most local government information services is the development of some kind of co-ordinated network in which existing information units retain their independence but co-operate more closely with colleagues in other departments under the aegis of a central unit. The net result can be very similar to the comprehensive service, although the chances of welding individual services into a coherent whole are less promising where there is no substantive means of control.

South Yorkshire County Council

The general information service for this authority is provided by the information section of the Department of Administration's Research and Intelligence Unit. This section, which is headed by a librarian, provides a number of broad based current awareness bulletins covering the press, journals, government publications, and district council minutes and also produces an index to county council policy decisions. It maintains a small library of general local government material and legal documentation and runs three 'sub libraries' serving architects, valuers and legal personnel.

In addition to the information section which has a staff of three

professional officers, one full time and one part time clerical officer, there are a number of departmental information points serving particular groups of officers. Engineers and planners both benefit from professionally run libraries and there are document collections supervised part time by non-librarians in the Treasurer's, environment and recreation and culture departments.

Corporate management in South Yorkshire is assisted in part by the Research and Intelligence Functional Group,²⁰ an interdepartmental meeting of officers designed to co-ordinate research activities within the authority. This group meets monthly and has a libraries sub-group, chaired by the head of the information section, and set up to co-ordinate documentary information provision within the authority. The sub-group meets each week and includes representatives from all departments except police and fire which are sited away from the county council headquarters in Barnsley. Its terms of reference are largely practical and include the organisation of book selection to avoid unnecessary duplication, the sharing out of government publications received by the authority according to their particular value to individual departments, and the discussion of general problems.

South Yorkshire is one of the few authorities which has well established formal machinery for departmental library co-ordination but the success of the system is still very much dependent on the good personal relationships built up between information handlers on a day-to-day basis. One sensible feature of the system is the inclusion of all kinds of people involved in documentary information provision, whether professionally qualified or not, and as such it recognises a situation in which professional librarians are often in a minority. Some other authorities seeking to establish this kind of co-ordinated network have restricted themselves to the development of contacts between professionals and thus exclude a number of possibly high quality information handlers.

Certain anomalies do, however, remain which cannot be resolved without an overall commitment by South Yorkshire to a corporate strategy of information provision. The libraries of the information section, engineer's department and planning department are all located in the same building within close reach of each other and there is inevitable duplication of stock and functions, particularly between the last two. There appear to be good arguments in favour of integrating them to form a single unit serving officers with often overlapping information needs, but this has so far not proved acceptable to the departments involved. However, the South Yorkshire experience does prove the value of regular personal contact between information providers in developing a common approach to information provision.

Sheffield City Council

Local government information services in Sheffield are being developed

by the public library under the aegis of the Linked Library Project set up in October 1974. The broad aim of this project is to develop information services for officers and members by encouraging closer contacts between the public library and individual departments, particularly those without separately organised information services of their own.

In the initial stages of the project a member of the reference library staff was seconded for a considerable period of his working time to advise departments on information matters including the organisation of document collections and ways of making greater use of them as active information sources. In some cases older material has been transferred for storage to the central library and the current stock of this library has been developed to include active collections in education, housing and recreation.

The public library has also experimented with a number of current awareness bulletins which proved popular in the authority but had to be discontinued for lack of resources. At the moment it is concentrating on departments with very little in the way of organised information services by producing two specialised journal abstracting bulletins in education and housing. It has also undertaken a survey of journal holdings in the council's departments and has considered centralising the ordering of all books and other documents for council departments in its bibliographical services division. Some departments have responded, and the ordering of government publications for most departments has now been taken over by the division in respect of standing orders and HMSO serial publications.

In addition to the services provided by the public library there are a number of departmental information points ranging from professionally run services in the planning and family and community services departments and in the careers office of the education department, to document collections maintained part time by non-librarians in the administration and legal department, environmental health department and estates and surveyor's department.

The long term aim of the Linked Library Project appears to be the appointment of professional librarians to service departmental information needs as a means of encouraging a common approach to information handling in the authority. In the meantime, closer co-ordination will be achieved through an officer working party comprising public librarians and officers at present in charge of departmental libraries under the chairmanship of the Deputy Director of Libraries. There are also plans for the allocation of accommodation within the town hall which would allow improved co-ordination between specialised departmental services and liaison with the central library.

Although the Linked Library Project is relatively underdeveloped, in the sense that the public library is limited in its activities by lack of available staff, the developments in Sheffield do show a clear under-

standing of the division of responsibilities between a central unit and departmental libraries in an information network. The existing departmental services in planning, family and community services and the careers office are relatively well established and the public library has not sought to duplicate their activities. The librarians in these departments are encouraged to maintain contact with each other and with the central library by attending the regular meetings of reference library staff and are to be included in the officer working group to co-ordinate services.

The central library has concentrated on providing general information services with appeal across departmental boundaries (although its efforts have been frustrated by lack of resources), central support services such as stock ordering, and practical help to departments with underdeveloped information services. It is, therefore, undertaking activities which cannot be done by individual departments without incurring an unnecessary waste of resources at authority level.

However, like South Yorkshire, Sheffield central library feels that the co-ordination approach is in some ways a second best alternative. It believes that the provision of library services to officers within the town hall could be accomplished by a single information unit or, at the most, two. However, in the likely event of departmental libraries remaining in existence, closer co-ordination through the proposed officer group is accepted as the best practical answer in the immediate future. The success of the Linked Library Project is heavily dependent on the willingness of departments to co-operate and there is no obligation on the part of departmental libraries to justify their separate existence as in the GLC example. This example reinforces the importance of continuing close contact between information user and information worker.

The major problem facing Sheffield is lack of staff at the central point to provide basic support services and broad based current awareness and to develop contacts with departments. This is a common problem facing all public library based services, and a pressing reason for the development of a strategy which capitalises on existing information expertise in the authority.

LINKS WITH OTHER INFORMATION PROVIDERS

The discussion in this chapter has concentrated largely on the development of links between library based information units but it has been stressed several times already that information provision in local government is not simply a question of libraries. Other people are also involved, including public relations officers, committee clerks, departmental research officers and statistical units, and a successful information network should be able to encompass these as well. The development of good relationships with other information providers is largely a question of personalities and the ability to exchange services of mutual benefit, but

it can be a delicate area, particularly where conflicting views on information are concerned.

For example, it may be difficult to build up a relationship of mutual trust with committee clerks who frequently have a restrictive attitude towards the information they hold and may try to censor its distribution. Attempts to provide them with something in return (indexes to committee minutes, for example) may meet with a hostile reception if committee clerks fear improved access to the material or suspect that the library is trying to take over their jobs. Public libraries face particular difficulties in this area because of the fear of some authorities that all documents will be made available to the general public, but even internally based services can meet opposition. One of them, for example, has seriously considered the withdrawal of its library licence permitting members of the public to use its services because of the fears of some committee clerks that confidential papers will go astray. A metropolitan county council research and intelligence unit also faced initial opposition to plans for a computer based index to committee documentation on the grounds that 'unsuitable' people might gain access to the material.

Library services may also face conflicts with public relations departments, although here it is usually a question of disagreements over roles. Many PR departments scan the press for members and senior officers and may resent the introduction of library based press bulletins which they feel duplicate or threaten their own services. In these situations it is necessary to make a careful distinction between the functions of a press bulletin (which is primarily a vehicle for informing people about relevant developments in the locality and outside) and a press cuttings service (which is normally designed to keep the authority up to date with its own public image).

Circumstances vary in all authorities and it is impossible to draw hard and fast conclusions about the best way to approach other information handlers. However, common sense should ensure that most of the obvious pitfalls are avoided, and the essence of common sense in this situation is a good knowledge of what other information providers are doing in order to avoid stepping on their professional toes. One would not, for example, introduce a bulletin alerting people about relevant professional meetings and conferences without first finding out what the establishments or personnel department's views were.

CONCLUSIONS

In the previous chapter it was argued that close contact with information users is essential for the success of a service and this maxim is equally true of other information handlers, whether librarians or not. All authorities contain information provision points of one kind or another and a service which ignores their existence or fails to make regular contact

with them is not only likely to offend potential allies but may also be giving a less than adequate service to its customers.

Most librarians in the local government field would admit that their appreciation of information problems in local government is poor, particularly in the early stages of a service, and in these circumstances it is essential that they glean all the knowledge they can from other information handlers and from the information provision picture in general. A departmental library, for example, however crude and 'unprofessional' is likely to reflect genuine information needs because it was set up by its own users for their benefit, and a clerical officer working part-time to maintain it will have more knowledge of those needs than any librarian coming into the department for the first time. The librarian may well be able to acquire as good a grasp of information needs in time, but only if he learns the basic lesson of the situation he was originally faced with—that genuinely useful information services can only be provided on the spot and with the continuous help of those people for whom they are designed.

The need for continuous referral back to users and other information providers has already been stressed, and in a situation where there is no overall responsibility for information handling and no real appreciation of the role to be played by information this is even more important. At authority level there appears to be some case for the inclusion of a senior officer as information manager in the corporate management team to monitor the role of all kinds of information in the corporate planning process, and thus provide information handlers with a coherent framework for their activities. This need is implicit in the LAMSAC report on management information requirements,²¹ and without such a framework librarians and others will continue to work largely in the dark in their attempts to co-ordinate services.

REFERENCES AND NOTES

- 1 PARTINGTON, L. *New directions in transport; sources of information: proceedings of a one-day conference, London, October, 1973*. Aslib, 1973.
- 2 SIMMONS, S.L. Local government and information science. *Information Scientist*, March 1977, 11(1), pp 25-28. (A letter discussing the role the Institute of Information Scientists might play in local government information services).
- 3 MUNICIPAL reference services. *Library Association Record*, December 1917, 19(12), pp 497-505.
- 4 CHIRGWIN, F.J. Local government literature. *Library Association Record*, August 1965, 67(8), pp 270-271.
- 5 FEATHERSTONE, T. *LOGA—where is it going?* In Research and information needs of London local government; proceedings of a one-day seminar held at

- the County Hall, London, on 20 June 1973, edited by K. Kirkland. *GLC Research Memorandum*, 427, 1974, pp 33-34.
- 6 STANDARDS for reference services in public libraries. *Library Association Record*, February 1970, 72(2), pp 53-57.
- 7 PUBLIC LIBRARIES RESEARCH GROUP. Public library aims and objectives. *Library Association Record*, December 1971, 73(12), pp 233-234.
- 8 DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE. *Staffing of public libraries*. HMSO, 1976. 3 volumes.
- 9 LIBRARY ASSOCIATION. *The organisation of information services in the new local authorities; observations on the Bains Committee recommendations*. Library Association, April 1973.
- 10 WHITE, B. *Planners and information*. Library Association, 1970. (LA Research Publication No.3).
- 11 BARNES, J. and HENDRY, J.D. Local government information services in the Renfrew District. *Scottish Library Association News*, July/August 1975, (128), pp 316-317.
- 12 WHITE, B. *Information for planning—studies towards the collection, organisation and dissemination of information for planners; report of studies*. Edinburgh University Planning Research Unit, June 1974. (OSTI Report no. 5198).
- 13 NOTTINGHAM COUNTY COUNCIL. Planning Department. *Planning department libraries; a report of a questionnaire survey*. The Department, 1971.
- 14 MANN, M.G. and WILSON, T.D. *Forum on social welfare library information research, Hallam Tower Hotel, Sheffield, June 28-30 1974; report of proceedings together with background papers presented for the forum*. University of Sheffield Postgraduate School of Librarianship and Information Science, 1974. (OSTI Report No. 5219).
- 15 WILSON, T.D. and DUNN, A.C. Library/information services in local authority social services departments; results of two surveys. *Journal of Librarianship*, July 1976, 8(3), pp 166-174.
- 16 EARWICKER, J. Corporate planning developments; information issues raised. *Burisa Newsletter*, March 1977, (27), pp 2-3.
- 17 GOMERSALL, A. *compiler*. Directory of information resources in the Greater London Council. *GLC Research Bibliography* No.46, July 1976. (Updated annually and available from the GLC Bookshop, County Hall, London SE1 7PB).
- 18 KENNINGTON, D. Information and local government. *Aslib Proceedings*, February 1976, 28(2), pp 46-65.
- 19 *LIBRARY reorganisation*. Report by the Director-General (to the) General Purposes Committee (and) General Services Management Board. Greater London Council, 1976.
- 20 SALMON, G. and KELLY, D. An approach to information monitoring: the

objectives. *Burisa Newsletter*, March 1976, (21), pp 11-13.

- 21 LOCAL AUTHORITIES MANAGEMENT AND COMPUTER COMMITTEE. *Information (what local governors need to know); interim report of the General Management Panel of LAMSAC*. LAMSAC, December 1976.

Documentation

No discussion of local government information services would be complete without some reference to the problems involved in making local government's own documentation available to those who need it. In spite of the emphasis by documentary information services on improving access to external sources of information, it can be argued that internal sources remain of paramount importance, at least to some groups within local government.

ELECTED MEMBERS

A recent thesis on the information needs of elected members in one authority estimated that an average backbencher's complement of committee documentation alone represented the equivalent of reading *War and Peace* between three and five times per month.¹ In this kind of situation it is unlikely that a member will consider access to external sources of information of major importance in practical terms although he may well feel he should in ideal circumstances. Members are faced with an ever increasing amount of documentation which they need to digest if they are to be well-informed on the activities of their own authorities, and a number are beginning to demand improved services to help them do this.

The question of members' information services, particularly those designed to improve access to internally generated information is inevitably tinged with organisational politics, and documentary information services need to be aware of this. Some members have argued that officers deliberately withhold information on policy solutions which conflict with the establishment viewpoint and that internal reports are often unintelligible to the layman. Since a member's reaction to a policy issue is partly determined by the information he receives, this has significant implications for the quality of decision making.² Some commentators have argued that the internal information sources in local government are conditioned by the needs of the 'administrative machine' and that

if members are to challenge the *status quo* effectively they need access to other kinds of 'alternative' information.³ Some information services have interpreted this to mean access to external information sources and have developed services accordingly.

However, it is arguable that they could make an even bigger contribution to solving the member's information problem by helping to open up the communications channels within local government itself. One elected member has suggested that the introduction of larger authorities on local government reorganisation prevents the member from developing an overall picture of local problems and makes communications between officers and members a great deal more difficult.⁴ As a result members are effectively cut off from some sources of information simply because the organisation is too big to be encompassed by one individual. It is even possible that some of the problems answered by the 'alternative' information disseminated by the information service could have been satisfied from internal sources had the member known where to look or whom to contact.

OFFICERS

Officers, too, face difficulties in getting access to information produced by their own authorities and find these sources of importance in their everyday work. The earlier chapter on user needs suggested that while external sources are valuable in keeping up-to-date on new developments, internal material is of much more importance in current work. Some kinds of officer, notably social workers, pay very little attention to published literature apart from legislation and standard reference works although this may be a reflection of the inadequacies of existing methods of information dissemination.

Documentary information services have so far concentrated mainly on officers at middle management level where information needs are often well articulated and amenable to conventional special library techniques. Less has been done to serve officers whose needs are diffuse or who have difficulty in perceiving or expressing them. These groups include 'field workers' (social workers, housing managers, site engineers, etc.), 'policy makers'⁵ (senior officers in all departments) and administrators. Evidence suggests that their needs are also closely related to information produced by the authority itself in documentary or other forms. Some attempt has already been made to help them in the development of authority-wide management information systems or specialised systems covering, for example, case work records.⁶ Reaction to the computerised information system has often been as mixed as to documentary services.

EXTERNAL v. INTERNAL INFORMATION SOURCES

It would be unfair to suggest that documentary information services fail

to recognise the importance of internal sources of information, and the bulk of this chapter will be concerned with the difficulties they face in dealing with local government documentation. However, it is undeniable that most of them have concentrated on improving access to books, journals and other material published outside local government. This has been justified in 'philosophical' terms as an attempt to broaden the information horizons of local government and, as such, is a perfectly valid objective. There is undoubtedly a need within local government for the broad based service provided by a daily press bulletin and other kinds of current awareness service and for comparative information from other organisations and disciplines. The aim of most documentary information services is to complement, not duplicate, existing sources of information, and most have avoided too close an involvement in the areas covered by other information providers within local government.

However, this strategy assumes that 'existing sources of information' are easily available within local government and this unfortunately is not always the case. Social workers cannot always get access to case records when they need them; members are not automatically informed about all council decisions affecting their wards; and social planners cannot always be sure that their latest piece of work on, say, the effects of high-rise living has not already been done in part by another department.

Librarians cannot opt out of dealing with internal sources of information simply on the grounds that their business is published literature or because of a desire to avoid antagonising other information handlers in the authority. Information users do not classify their needs in terms of kinds of source and a service which is unduly restrictive will be of limited value. It is also true that many of the problems surrounding local government documentation fall within the professional scope of librarians and, if for no other reason, they should be concerned to find solutions to them.

DOCUMENTATION NEEDS

In basic terms the information needs relating to local government documentation may be summarised as follows:

Access to information produced within the individual authority relating to policy decisions and the day-to-day operation of services:

Physical access—the ability to acquire a document at the time it is needed.

Intellectual access—the ability to extract the information required from a document in as simple a way as possible.

Access to similar documents produced by other authorities for:

Comparative purposes—to develop a picture of how other authorities tackle common problems.

Direct input to the policy-making process—a county council, for example, needs information on the activities of districts and of adjacent authorities where responsibilities overlap administrative boundaries.

The problems of dealing with the internal documentation of local authorities are immensely complicated and the discussion which follows is inevitably rather superficial. This is one of the areas of local government information work where more research is needed and the illustrations given should not be taken as representative of local authorities as a whole.

PROBLEMS FACING INFORMATION SERVICES IN DEALING WITH LOCAL DOCUMENTATION

VOLUME

The sheer amount of documentation produced by local government is a deterrent to the development of effective methods of control. There has been no systematic survey of local authority publishing but one can distinguish a considerable variety of types of document designed for both internal and external distribution.⁷ Among others they include minutes and agendas, survey reports, policy documents, plans, public inquiry documents, performance and policy review statements, financial statements, statistical publications, public participation documents, by-laws, guides to services, local histories, directories, maps, guidebooks, conference proceedings, planning permissions, submissions of evidence to central government and civic newspapers.

These are only some of the publications produced by local government, and there is evidence to suggest that documentary output is growing as a result of the structural changes imposed by reorganisation, increased statutory responsibilities, the introduction of corporate management and the development of more open government.⁸ There may be some decline with economic restrictions although this may be a decline in publishing standards rather than in quantity of output.

AVAILABILITY OF LOCALLY PRODUCED DOCUMENTS

Very few authorities have a central publishing organisation and in most cases publishing is handled on a departmental basis. Few librarians have a clear idea of what their authorities produce and acquire material largely on the basis of personal contacts. Among the problems encountered by libraries in acquisition are the following.

1. Departments have different ideas about what constitutes a document for outside consumption. In certain cases this can imply a rigid classification system in which material is sometimes barred from other authorities and from the public. In others it simply reflects the unwillingness of some departments to release documents in case the library gives the public free access to them. Departments also have varying attitudes towards the recording of research and some are more prolific publishers, even allowing for the fact that certain kinds of activity are more likely to generate documents than others. In some cases research work is never formally written up either for reasons of confidentiality or because the department feels the results are of purely local interest. This is particularly likely to occur in the case of information on misapplied techniques or other 'wasted effort'—information which is often of more use to other authorities or departments than the final success story.

Restrictive attitudes of this kind can also affect the inter-departmental availability of documents although here it is not necessarily due to a wish to deprive other officers of information. In Hampshire, for example, the planning department produces a considerable number of documents but only those available for sale are listed. There is no departmental publications policy or vetting procedure so that it is quite possible for outlying offices to be unaware of what the Research and Intelligence Unit or other central sections are publishing.

In general there seems to be a much greater awareness of the potential market for a document within a profession than within an authority or locality, and it is perhaps for this reason that county councils may find it difficult to acquire material from districts. The social services department in Hampshire makes its reports available to other authorities on demand and occasionally publicises work through the *Clearing House for Local Authority Social Services Research*,⁹ but reports are not normally distributed to other departments in Hampshire because they are not felt to be of interest. This picture could be repeated in many other authorities and contrasts rather oddly with the corporate approach to problem solving which most of them claim to support.

2. The lack of any recognisable contact to approach in departments for documents is another major problem faced by libraries. Some librarians argue that the best focus for acquisition activities should be the modern records or archives department or a central printing unit since all documents should pass through one, if not all, of these agencies. This may be true in some cases, but in many authorities archives departments only receive a selection of material (i.e. those

documents which departments think fit to preserve) and a number of authorities send printing jobs to outside contract or organise printing on a departmental basis. Such organisations are also unlikely to have access to documents produced in limited numbers for internal distribution in the departments concerned.

A possible contact point for documents at departmental level is the departmental filing clerk but LAMSAC has already shown that these may be few and far between.¹⁰ Many authorities still fail to allocate specific responsibility for filing and retrieving information and this is true of parts of Hampshire County Council. The research section of the social services department produced a standard filing and classification system after reorganisation in 1974 when a number of mutually incompatible systems were absorbed. However, in the absence of any staff to maintain the system progress has been minimal and filing continues to be organised on a divisional or even sectional basis.

3. There is also rarely any system for recording or depositing all documents at a central point in the authority, and library activities in this area tend to be confined to the recording of departmental book and journal collections. Archives departments, as indicated above, rarely capture all documents and, in any case, their functions are not always geared to the exploitation of documents as sources of information implicit in a positive information service. One authority, East Sussex County Council, does have a procedure for depositing all documents with the public library's local studies collection, but this department is both physically and administratively divorced from the Local Government Information Unit. A number of public libraries including Wiltshire and Berkshire are now acting as agents for the allocation of International Standard Book Numbers (ISBNs) to internal documents, but again this is likely to cover only those documents which the authority is willing to release to the general public.
4. Most local government documents, except those specifically produced for mass public consumption, are produced in relatively short print runs. Local government is not always able to judge the extent of the market for a particular document, even within its own departments, and this can produce difficulties for a library trying to acquire multiple copies of a document or title which was produced more than a few months previously.

Planning departments may be among the more efficient sectors of local government in this respect since they do sometimes maintain

lists of publications for sale as part of their statutory duty to inform the public of planning proposals and try to maintain complete collections for reference. Hampshire and Gwent planning departments are among those which do this and in the latter authority the list is maintained by the departmental librarian. In Wiltshire County Council planning documents are also kept in the departmental library and stored in both hard copy and microfilm.

5. Since local authorities are not primarily in the business of information dissemination they have not fully absorbed the practice of distribution lists for documents. Some libraries have found great difficulty in getting regular copies of committee agendas and minutes for this reason and the problem is even more likely to occur with departments involved in irregular publishing programmes.

AVAILABILITY OF DOCUMENTS PRODUCED BY OTHER AUTHORITIES

Local government officers and members are becoming increasingly interested in the experience of other authorities since reorganisation and this is likely to be reflected in demands on documentary services. Two major needs may be distinguished.

Firstly, a need for comparative information from other authorities of similar size and with similar problems. Thus Birmingham may be interested in knowing how Newcastle has approached the problems of inner city renewal and the GLC may require information on Liverpool's plans for dockland redevelopment. Larger authorities may also be interested in the experience of overseas authorities in particular areas—German approaches to pedestrianisation and Japanese solutions to the problem of air pollution, for example.

Secondly, there is a need for information on the policies and activities of neighbouring authorities. Counties need to know what is happening in districts and parish councils may require similar access to district plans. Authorities with in the same tier also need information on developments within a wider geographical region, hence the development of regional bodies such as the Standing Conference on London and South East Regional Planning. At a slightly different level authorities also need information on the activities of other local statutory bodies such as water and health authorities.

Some attempts have already been made to improve the exchange of information between authorities, particularly in the planning field,¹¹ but information services are still faced with considerable problems in identifying and acquiring documents produced by other authorities.

1. Identification

The major methods used by librarians in identifying documents for acquisition in the local government field are scanning relevant jour-

nals, the press and indexing and abstracting services. The coverage of the first two is naturally haphazard and depends on how newsworthy a particular document is or how often authorities send items to journals for review. One journal, the *Clearing House for Local Authority Social Services Research* produced at Birmingham University, is specifically designed to disseminate the results of local authority research in the social services. In some cases it contains the finished reports of projects but in others interim results are given together with a contact in the authority who can be approached for further information. However, the information contained in this journal is entirely dependent on local authority knowledge that it exists and on the initiative of particular officers in sending reports to it for publication.

Other secondary sources include the following.

Abstracting services. Most abstracting services in the field of local government cover the periodical press and, to a much lesser extent, books, pamphlets and reports in relevant subjects. Only two, the GLC research library's *Urban Abstracts* and the Department of the Environment and Transport's *Library Bulletin*, cover local government documentation to any degree and the Department of the Environment's headquarters library maintains a complete set of development and structure plans. However, the degree of coverage given by these services is inevitably dependent on the DoE's and research library's own acquisition policies and their success in identifying the documents produced in other authorities. In the case of the research library, such documents are obtained on the basis of their relevance to London local government, and *Urban Abstracts* thus excludes a lot of material which might be of interest to, say, a rural county council. In Scotland the principal source of information on local authority publications is the Planning Exchange's *Information Bulletin* and although its coverage is largely of planning, it is felt to be particularly valuable, perhaps because the Planning Exchange library supports it with an efficient loan and photocopy service.

Bibliographies. The major bibliographical sources used by librarians in identifying non-journal material is the *British National Bibliography* (BNB) which lists material received by the British Library under the Copyright Acts. Its coverage of local government documentation is, however, limited by the degree to which local authorities adhere to the Act and by their definition of what constitutes a published document. Much of what local government produces can be described as semi-published and few authorities seem to have a clear idea of the requirements

for the legal deposit of published documents with the British Library.

A few authorities do have International Standard Book Numbers (ISBNs) for allocation to published documents and these should eventually reach the BNB. Some departments, including East Sussex Planning Department, are also sending publications automatically to the Copyright Office but this is by no means common.

Published and semi-published report literature of the kind produced by local authorities can also be made available through the British Library Lending Division (BLLD) which publishes a regular *Announcements Bulletin* covering such material. In recent months the BLLD has tried to improve its coverage of local government documentation by writing to authorities in the London area indicating its willingness to list documents in the *Bulletin*. In some cases the authorities have agreed to send material automatically but in others they seem unwilling to broaden access to what they judge to be internal reports, and the BLLD is unlikely to pursue this policy on a national scale in the immediate future.

Research registers. The GLC research library maintains a register of London borough projects on its ACOMPLIS database with details of contacts and publications where any have been produced. The microfilm index to this database is available for sale to other local authorities and also includes details of all other publications received by the research library.

The Department of the Environment headquarters library also produces an annual four volume register of research with full indexes covering research on building and construction, environmental planning, roads and transport and environmental pollution¹² which includes details of some local government projects. However, it would appear that some authorities are unwilling to pass on details of projects if they are of purely local interest or if they are small scale. The Department of the Environment also rates projects for inclusion in the register against a fairly rigorous academic definition of research and some are inevitably rejected. However, it has also published *Research and Surveys*¹³ volumes for 1975 and 1976 which include projects failing to meet this definition, or received too late for inclusion in the main register. A significant proportion of these are local authority projects and the 1976 volume is particularly useful in the sense that it includes details of published reports where available.

The increasing interest in internal research registers is an

indication of the difficulty many officers find in keeping up to date even with work going on in their own authorities and there seems to be general dissatisfaction with conventional published registers.¹⁴ Services such as that provided by Brenda White to planners in her last major project¹⁵ seem to be much more popular because they help officers to keep in touch on a regular personal basis and the clearing house idea has received some support in fields other than planning.¹⁶

2. Acquisition

The problems facing libraries in acquiring copies of documents arise from the same factors which inhibit the development of comprehensive collections at local level—lack of a suitable contact point, short print runs, etc. It is, of course, a pointless exercise to inform people that documents exist unless they can get hold of them and several libraries have limited their subscriptions to abstracting bulletins because of the difficulty of acquiring the documents requested. The normal response of librarians to a situation like this is to borrow the document from elsewhere through regional library networks like Weslink (in the West Midlands) and LASER (London and South East Region) or from the national network represented by the British Library Lending Division. However, networks are only as effective as their participants and it has already been argued that individual libraries experience great difficulties in acquiring the documents produced by their own authorities.

As in the individual authority the acquisition of documents produced by local government depends on having a good range of personal contacts in other authorities and these will take considerable time to develop. Other libraries can sometimes help in this and may even lend documents in certain circumstances. However, the ability of libraries in, say, the GLC or Department of the Environment to do this is limited by the demands for such documents among their own users.

INTELLECTUAL ACCESS TO DOCUMENTS

Physical access to documents is not the only problem faced by officers and members in local government. Elected members in particular often find difficulty in extracting from documents the information they require and this has been one of the reasons behind their demands for improved information services. This is a complex problem but a number of different facets can be distinguished.

1. Volume of documentation

This has already been mentioned as a major difficulty faced by all those in local government but in the case of members it may be parti-

cularly severe. The reaction of members to the vast amounts of paper facing them may vary, but it is likely to force them into concentrating heavily on their own particular committees at the expense of developing a wider view of local problems. It can effectively prevent them from looking at other sources of information and, perhaps, from challenging the administrative *status quo* when changes are needed.

The Committee on the Management of Local Government in 1967¹⁷ found that while many members stated 'policy making' to be their most important function, the majority spent most of their time involved in the administrative minutiae of particular services. This is no doubt partly due to natural inclination and one study of councillors in Kensington and Chelsea¹⁸ found that a majority of members preferred this kind of activity and deliberately excluded external sources of information in dealing with local problems. However, these kinds of attitudes may develop out of practical necessity—many members are so overwhelmed with work that they have to restrict themselves in some way and many do so by retreating into the 'administrative machine'. Most people find it easier to deal with localised problems within a given framework than to question the bases of that framework constructively.

2. Inappropriate emphasis of documentation

Committee agendas, reports and minutes are produced by officers as a record of the authority's activities and, as such, are determined by the needs of the administrative process. However, this emphasis may be inappropriate to some of the information needs of elected members and, indeed, of the corporate management system.

One difficulty is the failure of committee documentation to give members access to information on developments in their wards on a regular basis. Another frequently expressed need is for some means of keeping up-to-date on the progress of particular aspects of policy, and again this kind of information is not easily extracted from committee documentation in its conventional form.

A related problem is the failure of the reporting system in some authorities to keep policy-makers in touch with the effects of changing external circumstances on particular policies and plans, and this can often only be solved by the creation of new kinds of document to present information in a different way.

In Hampshire County Council's social services department, for example, documents are produced on specific research projects and policy issues for presentation to committee or use at management level. However, there is at the moment no easy way for policy makers to compare policies and plans with real problems in the community. As a result the department's research section is planning to introduce

a regular series of statistical/narrative reports to give up-to-date information on the social and economic environment as an indication of changing trends in relation to stated policies.

A similar approach is being investigated in the county planning department where the current reporting system makes it difficult for policy makers to evaluate plans and forecasts in the context of a changing environment. Information on the environment is, of course, available in the form of detailed statistics on population, planning applications, land use, etc., but at the moment its use is confined to the department itself as part of the production of finished plans and forecasts. The principal aim is to exploit this environmental information more widely by comparing it on a regular basis with stated policies and plans using agreed performance indicators as a measure of change. Monitoring and performance review reports will be produced regularly as a result of the comparison process and discussed at policy-making level to enable the continuous adjustment of plans in relation to changing circumstances.

These developments are not, of course, unique to Hampshire but they do indicate an important trend in the use of information which has accompanied the introduction of corporate management. The emphasis is now firmly on the constant evaluation of policies in relation to new information, and this has considerable implications for the mechanics of information transfer and for the presentation of often highly technical information in new kinds of document.

So far, however, local government has not progressed much further than the creation of sophisticated data handling systems and, as indicated earlier, relatively little thought has been given to the role of 'soft' information or to the needs of the ultimate users of data. As a result its physical presentation often leaves a lot to be desired.

3. Style of documentation

A number of members have complained that committee documentation and other material produced by officers is often unintelligible to the layman either from the excessive use of technical jargon or from sheer bad writing. The layout of agendas has come in for criticism¹⁹ as has the quality of communication with the general public.²⁰ A report on a scheme to plant flowers on a roundabout has been called 'Memorial on proposed horticultural treatment for a gyratory vehicular system', and while this may be an extreme example, most authorities could come up with similar stylistic monstrosities.

Although the above examples relate primarily to the difficulties faced by elected members, officers also suffer from the inadequacies of their own documents. Few authorities have technical editing facilities for

working documents and this can create difficulties for officers trying to absorb the writings of less literate colleagues. However, the major difficulties for officers seem to be related to the inadequacies of departmental filing systems as information retrieval systems and their general lack of knowledge of the publishing activities of colleagues in their own and other departments.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

In general terms the problems outlined can be approached from two standpoints. One could argue that the main problem lies with local authorities themselves in their failure to develop a coherent policy towards the monitoring of research and the publication of information with both local and general significance. Further work should, therefore, be directed towards looking at how information is generated, recorded and distributed and at how local government's attitudes towards document dissemination are determined. This would no doubt be a fruitful area for research and could form part of a more general study of information flow within local government.

It is undoubtedly true that any attempts at improvements in this area will be limited until information handlers develop a greater understanding of such attitudes and, in particular, an understanding of why so few authorities consider an efficient documentation policy to be necessary.

However, this project is largely concerned with the practical problems facing information services today and there is considerable scope for improvement even within the confused framework outlined above. It may be instructive to look at some of the solutions adopted in the United States and Canada, as well as those proposed in this country, since their problems mirror those of the UK quite closely.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION PRODUCED WITHIN A SINGLE AUTHORITY

The major needs here are for a central register, regularly updated, of all documents produced by the authority which are available outside the department in which they were produced, and for effective means of getting access to the documents themselves.

Central register of documents

A number of American public libraries have attempted to produce comprehensive bibliographies of local government documentation, including Madison Municipal Reference Service²¹ and Chicago Municipal Reference Library.²² Some are helped in this activity by the existence of local deposit laws which require authorities to pass copies of all their documents to the public library but, as in this country, the laws of deposit are not always adhered to.²³

In the UK public libraries do not benefit from local deposit laws

and the development of a central register of documents may need to be done on an *ad hoc* basis by contacting individual departments. As indicated earlier some libraries have already attempted this with somewhat mixed results but there is some evidence to show that authorities are beginning to appreciate the value of such a service. One London borough, for example, is developing a central collection and register of all its documents on microfilm, although this function is not part of the local government information service.

In some cases the information service may find part of the work already done in listings maintained by individual departments, printing units or modern records departments, and it could be argued that the latter department is the proper location for a function of this kind. However, as argued earlier, their methods and functions are not necessarily appropriate to the needs of information services which need rapid notification of new documents in order to exploit them effectively for information users. Few information services have a clear idea of what material is held in archives or records departments, even though they are sometimes in the same department, and there is little evidence to show what their contribution to a central register of local documents might be. However, closer contact between information services and modern records departments, where they exist, could be beneficial.

The Society of Archivists' recommendations for local government archive services made in 1971 state that archivists should participate in 'the administration of current and semi-current records prior to their appraisal and designation for permanent preservation, or for immediate or ultimate destruction, or for microfilming prior to destruction' and as such they have an obvious contribution to make to an efficient information service.²⁴

Central collection of documents

One could argue that a central register of documents, together with details of their physical location, is all that is necessary to ensure rapid access to local government documents. However, so many reports tend to be produced in such limited print runs that it is safer, by and large, to ensure their survival by collecting at least one copy of every report together in a single location.

UK information services are severely hampered in this activity by the absence of any local deposit conventions and they might consider proposing the introduction of a system to be run as part of the local government information service. However, in the absence of deposit regulations an information service can improve its coverage of local documents by developing closer contacts with information producers and handlers in the authority (research and intelligence units, departmental research sections, committee clerks, administrative officers, etc.). In one London borough the reference librarian has built up his collection

of local documents partly as a result of attending regular meetings of the inter-departmental research steering group. It is also essential that the information service is placed on any document distribution lists operated by departments, although these may be few and far between.

Public library based services may face some resistance from the authority in building up a register or collection of local government documents if departments are unwilling to allow the public access to internal reports. This attitude has made it difficult for some libraries to gain access even to agendas and minutes. In practical terms it may be simpler for the public library service to keep local documents together in a separate collection, and with a separate catalogue if necessary, in order to allay some of these fears. Such action need not necessarily limit access to the documents but it does enable a measure of control if the authority requires it.

Information services based in central locations, such as research and intelligence units, should have less trouble in acquiring documents, particularly those from their own department, although few services of this type claim to have a complete collection. They may well receive all documents which pass through a formal vetting procedure but cannot always capture those produced by departments for internal use only.

The 'political' problems involved in building up a comprehensive collection of local documents should not be underestimated, particularly by public libraries, and some of the likely difficulties are suggested by the rather greater experience of American public libraries in this area. In New York, for example, the public library has maintained a Municipal Reference and Research Center for some years to control the issue of all public documents, act as a sales point and provide a public enquiry service. However, the optimism of the early years²⁵ has been replaced by a certain amount of disillusion and the service has been less than completely successful.²⁶

Difficulties include the lack of regulations covering the publication of city records and other documents, problems over document confidentiality, and political opposition to the service from other sectors of the authority who feel that the control of documentation is their responsibility. The New York Center is, of course, a specifically public service so that opposition was always likely from those people who wish to restrict the availability of information. However, the major limiting factor on its development is closely mirrored in British experience—the failure of the authority to see documentation control and information dissemination as important functions.

Possible models for a documentation policy

One of the larger regional health authorities has introduced a publications policy which took effect in September 1976 with the aim of achieving 'as far as is possible, control over internally produced publications and to facilitate their retrieval'. Publication is defined as a document pro-

duced on behalf of the RHA or one of its divisions and published with the authority of the head of the department or division. Detailed instructions are given on the layout of title pages of documents coming into this category. They are to include a full title; details of the issuing division and personal authors; full date of publication; place of publication; classification; status (e.g. revised, reprint, etc.); and a short summary of the contents of the document. Documents are not expected to be restricted in the normal course of events and permission to classify a document must be sought at the highest level. The printing unit is instructed to notify the RHA library of all new publications by providing a copy of each title page and the library will maintain a card index of each document. On publication the printing unit will supply two copies of each document to the library for filing under title by each department or division. When publications which were classified at the time of issue become freely available, the issuing authority will notify the library so that the index can be amended. The success of this eminently reasonable policy has, however, been extremely limited because of internal political factors which operate to the disadvantage of the library and only one division of the RHA is co-operating.

Secondly, a large local authority has also developed a policy for the control of council publications which does not, however, include any proposals for a formal system of deposit. The policy is intended to overcome the problems created by the lack of any central system for controlling departmental publishing activities.

All departments are requested to submit publishing projects whether new publications, new editions, or reprints (free or priced), once approved by the relevant departmental committee, to a central point for consideration. A standard form has been developed for this purpose giving full bibliographical and printing details of the proposed publication, its content, potential market and likely costs including staff costs. Departments are also expected to justify the publication of each document and to submit details to the council's publication officer for comment. He will allocate an ISBN and produce figures showing postage and packing charges, unit costs, retail price, etc.

ACCESS TO DOCUMENTS PRODUCED BY OTHER AUTHORITIES

The problems involved in getting access to documents produced by a single authority are naturally reflected in those of acquiring documents produced elsewhere. The chapter on co-operation suggested a number of ways in which authorities could take joint action on the storage and recording of local government documentation to reduce the time spent at local level in identifying and acquiring documents and to ensure a wider dissemination of local government publications.

The major difficulty lies in the acquisition of 'technical' and research reports and there does seem to be a need for a local government docu-

mentation centre at national level. The British Library Lending Division (BLLD) is aware of this need, and a greater degree of publicity for its services might prompt a better response from local authorities, particularly if it was organised with the active co-operation of local authority associations. Approaches by BLLD to individual authorities have had mixed fortunes, however, and there is a considerable amount of latent opposition to making some reports more widely available. It is unlikely that this will ever be overcome completely but a possible framework for improvement might be:

1. Systematic arrangements for the deposit of all unclassified documents with a library or information unit in each authority. A minimum of three copies might be required—one for inclusion in the information unit's working collection, one for deposit in a local archive and one for despatch to a national collection, possibly the BLLD. The last function could be operated at regional level with local units sending copies to collecting points such as regional library bureaux.
2. Development of a national store of British and, possibly, foreign local government documents available to all information units as hard copy loans or as microfiche. Regular current awareness bulletins of material received might also be issued along the lines of existing BLLD publications.

The development of an effective national network of this kind would, of course, be simplified if each authority maintained a coherent publications policy for monitoring the generation and publication of documents for all markets.

Foreign experience in this field may be of some value in developing solutions to the problems of access to local government documents.

USA

In 1972 the Greenwood Press, a commercial publishing company, introduced the *Index to Current Urban Documents*²⁷ in an attempt to improve bibliographical control over the official publications of large cities and counties in the USA and Canada. It appears quarterly and is supported by the *Urban Documents Microfiche Collection* which makes some documents cited in the *Index* available for sale.

The scope of the *Index* is limited to cities with a population over 100,000 and counties over 1,000,000, and its coverage is dependent on the ability of public libraries to provide Greenwood Press with documents.

The National Technical Information Service, which is part of the US Department of Commerce, already provides a service on government and government sponsored technical research reports which includes material

on urban affairs. A similar service (i.e. current awareness bulletins, sale of documents, *ad hoc* information searches, etc.) is due to be introduced covering US state and local government documentation on urban affairs.²⁸

Canada

In Canada there have been two attempts to improve the bibliographical control of local government documentation. One, *Urban and Regional References* published by the Canadian Council on Urban and Regional Research,²⁹ covers journal articles, books and central government publications as well as local documents and it is restricted to the larger cities and municipalities.

The other, *Profile Index*,³⁰ was introduced in 1973 and is a subscription service to current publications of Canadian provinces and municipalities. These are made available in microfiche accompanied by the *Index* which lists the documents by corporate author and subject. Five subscription plans are available, ranging from complete coverage to selected subjects, and the subscription covers the publications of all departments, boards, committees etc. reporting directly to the government bodies listed in the *Index*. Certain categories of publication are excluded such as gazettes, minutes, statutes, bye-laws and maps.

There are also plans for a *Canadian Urban Index* to be produced quarterly or bi-monthly and covering most material available in Canada relevant to urban and regional affairs.³¹

France

In 1974 six organisations with an interest in urban management formed an organisation known as Micro-Urba which collects semi-published and unpublished reports and theses, specialist journals and some monographs and makes them available on microfiche.³² Micro-Urba's services include the sale of microfiched documents, *ad hoc* information searches and a quarterly current awareness bulletin, *Selection Micro-Urba*.

INTELLECTUAL ACCESS TO DOCUMENTS

Most proposed solutions in this field relate to improving access to minutes, agendas and other committee documentation, although some work has been done by LAMSAC on departmental filing systems.

1. Volume of documentation

LAMSAC has advised some local authorities on how to reduce the 'paper problem' at source but most information services are not in a position to do this. However, they may be able to improve matters through the development of more effective digests and indexes to help members and officers with both current and retrospective information problems. Examples include:

regular digests of council and committee decisions produced as part of normal committee servicing;

the introduction or improvement of summaries of committee documentation, to help a member make more informed judgments on what he needs to read, have also been suggested. Information services employing librarians with abstracting skills could provide advice in this area;

the production of 'special' versions of major reports or statistical material for member use are becoming increasingly common in local government and include publications of the 'facts and figures' type. Where information services are based on research and intelligence units this kind of activity may be the direct responsibility of statisticians working alongside librarians and other information providers;

improvements in the distribution and layout of agendas and committee reports. Simple changes in the order of items and greater attention to member needs in the collation of papers can help considerably as will effective despatch systems which ensure that the member has access to papers well before the relevant meeting. One London borough has suggested a multi-tier system to replace the existing one in which every member receives a list of agenda items and all supporting documents. According to individual need members would be provided with:

a list of agenda items together with brief details of whether they refer to policy or operation of services and details of possible recommendation; or

the above together with summaries of the supporting documents; or

the above with full supporting documents.

After the meeting members would be provided with:

a list of agenda items with details of action taken; or

the full minutes.

It has also been suggested that induction courses for members could be improved to give them a better insight into committee procedure and how to find their way through committee docu-

mentation. Rapid reading courses for members have also attracted some interest.

Indexes to council and committee documentation are also produced in some authorities, although experience suggests that these are of more use to information handlers than to members or other officers. Both manual and mechanised systems are used.

In Hull the members' information officers maintain a simple card index, updated every two weeks, to committee documentation for use in enquiry answering. Back indexes are being printed but they are principally working tools for the information handlers. Minutes are indexed by committee and by the subject terms normally employed by committee clerks.

In the Lothian Regional Council's Members' Services Unit a more detailed manual index is being developed for use in information retrieval and for eventual publication.

In the GLC and the London Borough of Lewisham, IBM KWIC (Keyword in Context) is used to produce indexes of council and committee minutes (the former only in the GLC). In Lewisham the Research and Information Unit produces a KWIC index covering all minutes and individual KWOC (Keyword Out of Context) indexes for each committee.

Other authorities, such as Cleveland, have opted for more sophisticated systems such as IBM STAIRS and ICL BIRD which can provide full text information retrieval or a more conventional index as hard copy print out, Computer Output Microfilm (COM) or visual display. Detailed indexes to particularly important local government documents are also a possibility. The GLC research library produced a KWIC index to the *Greater London Development Plan*³⁸ some years ago and has used the same approach for papers presented to the Layfield Inquiry on local government finance.

2. Inappropriate emphasis of documentation

As indicated earlier, a major problem is the inability of members to maintain a continuous view of developments in wards or other geographical areas. A number of authorities have introduced or proposed services to try and overcome this difficulty.

Simple changes in distribution to ensure that a member received

a copy of all committee documentation relating to his ward regardless of the committee involved. A cheaper alternative is the creation of central files for each ward containing the same information and kept in the members' secretariat or other easily accessible point.

The indexing of committee documentation by ward. Lewisham's Research and Information Unit includes ward codes in its KWIC index of minutes thus enabling individual print-outs on a regular basis for each of 23 wards.

The preparation of more detailed 'ward profiles' including committee and other local government documentation, statistical data from national and local sources and, possibly, external sources of information such as the local press. Lewisham, Hammersmith and the GLC are among the authorities developing such services.

The introduction of selective dissemination of information services on a ward basis as in Hull where members are automatically provided with all relevant information on their ward if they so wish.

Another difficulty faced by both members and officers is the inability to follow a council policy through from conception to implementation and beyond. Possible answers include the following.

Visual displays of the progress of projects. Hammersmith has experimented with this kind of service and is hoping to expand it.

An index to policy decisions. South Yorkshire County Council has experimented in this area, although not without difficulty, by developing a system in which committee papers are scanned by a variety of people to isolate items with policy implications.³⁴ Key-words are assigned to each item by an information assistant in the department of administration and entered on an optical coincidence card system thus enabling the retrieval of information according to any one or a combination of characteristics. This system is to be complemented by a regular digest of decisions comparable to the service's *District Bulletins* which cover decisions of interest to the county council taken by its district councils.

3. Style of documentation

Activity in this area does not normally come within the province of library based local government information services, although there is an obvious need for improvements in most local authorities. One

suggestion has been for courses in report writing for all local government officers concerned in producing documents for internal use, and there is a general need for improved standards of technical editing and layout of documents.

Local authorities have progressed considerably in this respect as far as documentation for the public is concerned, but seem to have done little to help their own officers and members. A recent article on local authority reports dealing with conservation and preservation noted that 'There is a keen contrast between glossy, expensive, illustrated reports and cheaply produced, perhaps duplicated, ones' and that while 'creative production is a strong feature of the reports received' the less glossy documents are equally informative.³⁶ One wonders, however, whether they are as frequently read.

CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has described some of the problems facing officers and members in local government when dealing with information produced by their own authorities and has suggested a number of ways in which information services could help. However, a great deal more information on the publishing practices of local authorities and their attitudes towards information availability is necessary before effective systems of bibliographical control can be developed. In the meantime local government information services can begin to improve matters by closer contact with their authorities both to broaden their knowledge of what documents already exist and to gain a better idea of the problems facing information users in dealing with them.

REFERENCES AND NOTES

- 1 JENKINS, R. *The provision of information for members of the Greater London Council*. Polytechnic of the South Bank, 1976. (Diploma in Management Studies thesis).
- 2 EDDISON, T. Officers and members. *Municipal Journal*, 29 November 1974, 82(48), pp 1517-1518, 1520.
- 3 ROGERS, S. and STEWART, J.D. *The need for variety in documentation and information systems; the case of the elected representative*. OECD, 1975. (Paper given at the Symposium on Documentation for Urban Management, Paris, 19-21 November 1975.)
- 4 VERNON, B. Did reform help the member? *Municipal Review*, April, 1975, 46(544), pp 24-25.
- 5 GILLESPIE, J.M. Policy information. *Burisa Newsletter*, December 1974, (14), pp 8-12.

- 6 e.g. DERBYSHIRE, M.E. *A comparison of five computerised information systems in social services departments*. Lancashire Social Services Department, 1974.
- 7 GRAYSON, L. British local government documentation. *Government Publications Review*, 1976, 3(2), pp 203-311.
- 8 GRAYSON, L. Urban documentation: its nature and purpose. *Journal of Librarianship*, October 1975, 7(4), pp 229-251.
- 9 CLEARING house for local authority social services research. Monthly.
- 10 LOCAL Authorities Management Services and Computer Committee. *Filing and information retrieval through classification and coding*. LAMSAC, June 1976.
- 11 GOSS, P.G. and OAKLEY, M.R. The information challenge of reorganisation. *Planner*, April 1976, 62(3), pp 75-77.
- 12 DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT. Headquarters Library. *Register of Research*. Annual.
 Part 1 : Building and construction
 Part 2 : Environmental planning
 Part 3 : Roads and transport
 Part 4 : Environmental pollution.
- 13 DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT. Headquarters Library. *Research and surveys 1975*. 1976 (Information Series No.23) *Research and surveys 1976*. 1977. (Information Series No.24)
- 14 HUSTWIT, J. *Survey of social welfare information sources*. National Institute of Social Work, 1977.
 (A useful summary of the problems facing social services departments.)
- 15 WHITE, B. *Information for planning—studies towards the collection, organisation and dissemination of information for planners; report of studies*. Edinburgh University, Planning Research Unit. June 1974. (OSTI Report No.5198)
- 16 GOODEY, B. Social research in new communities. *Built Environment*, April 1973, 3(4), p 233.
- 17 MINISTRY OF HOUSING AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT. Committee on the management of local government. *Management of local government*. Vol.2: The local government councillor. HMSO, 1967.
- 18 DEARLOVE, J. *Politics of policy in local government; the making and maintenance of public policy in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea*. Cambridge University Press, 1973.
- 19 BROWN, I. Agenda. *Local Government Review*. 24 January 1976, 140(4), pp 51-52.
- 20 RICHARDS, D. Why not write English? *Municipal Journal*, 24 May 1974, 88(21), pp 637-639.
- 21 WAIDELICH, A. Information/reference service from local documents: a case

- study. *Illinois Libraries*, April 1975, 57(4), pp 280-281.
- 22 HILBURGER, M.J. The state of the art; bibliographic control and organisation of local documents. *Illinois Libraries*, April 1975, 57(4), pp 269-271.
 - 23 LEWY, C.W. Urban documents as reference tools. *Government Publications Review*, Spring 1974, 1(3), pp 269-275.
 - 24 RECOMMENDATIONS for local government archive services. *Society of Archivists Journal*, October 1971, 4(4), pp 349-351.
 - 25 O'SHANNON, M. For the control of municipal documents. *Special Libraries*, March 1970, 61(3), pp 127-130.
 - 26 O'SHANNON, M. The ebbing of municipal documents and the flow of public information in New York. *Government Publications Review*, Spring 1976, 3(1), pp 51-60.
 - 27 *INDEX to Current Urban Documents*. Greenwood Publishing Company. Quarterly.
 - 28 Details are included in the NTIS *Information Services General Catalog* available from the National Technical Information Service, 5285 Port Royal Road, Springfield, Virginia, 22161, USA.
 - 29 CANADIAN COUNCIL ON URBAN AND REGIONAL RESEARCH. *Urban and regional references*, pp 1945-1960. With supplements.
 - 30 *PROFILE Index*. Micro Media Ltd. Monthly.
 - 31 Details from the Intergovernmental Committee on Urban and Regional Research (ICURR), 36 Wellesley Street West, Toronto, Ontario M4Y 191, Canada.
 - 32 GILLE, D. *Mise en place du reseau français de documentation sur l'aménagement et l'urbanisme*. OECD. 1975.
(Paper given at the Symposium on Documentation for Urban Management, Paris, 19-21 November 1975. Micro-Urba's address is 15 Avenue des Belges, 13100 Aix-en-Provence, France.)
 - 33 THOMAS, P.A. A KWIC index to the GLDP Inquiry transcripts. *Greater London Council Intelligence Unit Quarterly Bulletin*, March 1973, (22), pp 5-11.
 - 34 SALMON, G. and KELLY, D. An approach to information monitoring; the objectives. *Burisa Newsletter*, March 1976, (21), pp 11-13.
 - 35 BLOXSIDGE, R. The local authority contribution; a bibliographic note. *Town Planning Review*, October 1975, 46(4), pp 466-480.

CHAPTER 6

Services and Systems

The discussion in this chapter is based on the services provided in between 50 and 60 authorities of varying types and sizes and, while the 'sample' is not strictly representative, it does give a reasonable picture of the kinds of activities undertaken by broad based local government information services. It is important to remember that most of these services are small in terms of both staff and finance and that none are in a position to provide all these facilities. This is a complete picture designed to indicate what the possibilities are, based on current experience.

DOCUMENT SUPPLY

This is a basic activity of all documentary information services and takes a number of forms. The development of a separate local government library or a specialised collection within a public library is the most obvious example; these are often built up round a basic stock gathered from departmental libraries and document collections or from the general public library stock. It is, for example, fairly common for a public library based service to take over the storage of material coming into the system under the HMSO selective subscription scheme since it is likely to be more heavily used by local government than most other customer groups. These collections are then supplemented by the acquisition of material on the basis of direct requests from officers and members and through the regular scanning of incoming material, particularly the press and journals. Standard bibliographical sources, such as the *British National Bibliography*, are not widely used as selection tools because of their lack of currency and relatively poor coverage of local government documentation. The HMSO *Daily List* and indexing and abstracting services such as the Departments of the Environment and Transport's *Library Bulletin*¹ and the GLC's *Urban Abstracts*² are also used as sources for new publications or relevant journal articles, while in Scotland the Planning Exchange's *Information Bulletin*³ is used widely.

In most cases these collections are relatively small (a very rough estimate would be approximately 2,000 to 3,000 books and pamphlets, 50 to 70 journal titles; local and national newspapers; and local documentation such as minutes and departmental reports) and are likely to remain so in the present economic climate. The principal aim of most local government librarians is to build up a working collection of documents which are intensively used and to rely on outside sources for less essential material. These sources include the local public library system, academic and specialist libraries in the area and the British Library Lending Division (BLLD), and the volume of inter-library loans created by a service can be large in proportion to its size. In Suffolk, for example, the local government library is the biggest user of inter-loan facilities in the public library network.

The only local government library to approach self-sufficiency in stock is the GLC research library. In the case of other authorities it is impossible to give any general picture of the kinds of material held since the potential holdings are so great and the nature of each stock tends to be coloured by the views of the librarian in charge and the particular orientation of the service. In Wiltshire, for example, there is a noticeable slant towards social welfare material because of the origin of the service in a social services abstracting bulletin. Some librarians make a special effort to collect local government documentation and material from pressure groups while others concentrate on statistical serials. Most mention the importance of newspapers and government publications, including statutory instruments and circulars, but there is a rather surprising lack of interest in abstracting and indexing services perhaps because of their generally poor quality in the local government field. Wiltshire's local government information service is one of the few to make a special point of collecting, scanning and circulating specialist abstracting journals to relevant officer groups and most restrict themselves to the Department of the Environment's *Library Bulletin* and, possibly, *LOGA*⁴ or *Urban Abstracts*.

Some local government information services based on public libraries have no separate collection and if material is acquired specifically for local authority use it is incorporated into the main reference stock. However, several public libraries have used their entry into the local government field as a means of broadening their stocks. Sheffield, for example, has improved its coverage of housing, education and recreation although it has no separate local government library. The development of services to the authority should also encourage greater use of existing stock if the findings of a GLC survey of London borough libraries a few years ago are to be believed. This study, which looked at the documentary needs of planners, architects and valuers in four London boroughs,⁵ found that almost all the sources found useful by these groups were already held by the public library system although almost totally unused.

Two services, East Sussex and Derbyshire, rely almost entirely on the rest of the library system for access to documents and have only limited separate stocks. In East Sussex the local government librarian does select material for the authority and this is held in the local government unit for a limited time before being passed on to the relevant part of the public library system. A weekly current awareness bulletin is compiled from journals stocked in a local reference library and the librarian also makes heavy use of Sussex University library. In Derbyshire the local government service is located in Matlock at the County Library Headquarters, which is not a public service point, and acquires many of its documents from reference libraries in Chesterfield and Derby.

Local government librarians do face a number of difficulties in acquiring and processing documents which can hinder the development of balanced collections and the provision of a responsive document supply service.⁶ A significant proportion of the documents required in a local government library are unconventionally published and rarely listed in the normal bibliographical sources used by librarians. This is particularly true of pressure group material and local government documentation, which can often only be identified by careful scanning of the press and journals or through personal contacts in the librarian's own and other authorities. Many of these documents are free of charge or priced so that they do not fit easily into a conventional ordering or acquisitions system in which the administrative cost of using the system may be higher than that of the document. As a result some public library based services have felt unable to take advantage of centralised bibliographical services and are forced into direct contacts with organisations to acquire material of this kind. This may be more efficient but it is also time consuming and may lead the librarian into spending less time on the more positive aspects of information provision than he would like.

Another difficulty—the speed with which officers and members require material—can also militate against the use of centralised ordering and processing services in a public library or supplies department which tend to react too slowly for the local government service. Cheshire's information service is among those which have moved away from using centralised facilities in favour of the more time consuming but efficient alternative of ordering and processing at local level. Even direct ordering through a library supplier may prove too slow in some cases and the GLC research library, for example, is now spending some £50 a week in 'quick orders' for documents acquired direct from their publishers. The need for a rapid response to requests for documents is also one of the reasons behind the reluctance of some services to use conventional public library inter-library loan procedures.

Apart from the development of a library with conventional loan and reference facilities, most local government information services also supply documents in response to requests from current awareness bulle-

tins, acquisitions lists and other information dissemination services. Indeed, this can be the major document supply activity of those services which concentrate heavily on the production of bulletins. The principal difficulties encountered here are the lack of suitable photocopying facilities (to provide copies of press cuttings, journal articles, etc., listed in a bulletin) and the absence of sufficient clerical staff to maintain files of cuttings and other material and to service requests as they come in. The success of a current awareness service depends on its ability to react quickly to demand and a service which is forced to route requests to a central reprographic unit or a photocopier sited away from the library is less responsive than it might be. The lack of clerical staff can be a major drawback and it is an obvious waste of resources to force a professionally qualified information handler into routine tasks such as back-up to a bulletin.

The supply of documents to the authority for post-entry training purposes is another aspect of the work of some public library based services, including those at Bexley, Renfrew, Suffolk and Leicestershire, as is the ordering of documents for individual departments to enable them to take advantage of public library discounts and centralised bibliographical services. These are often valuable facilities to offer to the initial development of a service since they represent concrete savings of time and money to the authority.

There are, however, legal problems attached to the use of public library discounts for the benefit of local authority departments. The public library obtains a discount of up to 10 per cent on the net purchase price of books provided they are 'solely for the use of the library and not for resale' under the terms of the Net Book Agreement 1957⁷ and it cannot technically buy material for departments without breaching this agreement since the handing over of documents to the departments would constitute a resale under its terms. However, the library can buy books on behalf of departments at discount if it retains ownership and merely loans the documents outside, albeit on a permanent basis. Many authorities now benefit wholly or in part from such a service both for books and government publications, the latter acquired at a 50 per cent discount.

One final aspect of document supply is the circulation of journals but this is becoming less and less common as in most special libraries. The delays involved in long circulation lists are usually unacceptable and services are coming to rely more on the display of journals in the library and the dissemination of information through current awareness bulletins.

CURRENT AWARENESS BULLETINS

The production of bulletins of one kind or another is the hallmark of most broad based documentary services and bulletins are often the first

service to be offered to the authority. In the case of services with limited staff sited away from their customers, bulletins may be almost the only output and there are often good reasons for the concentration on this aspect of information provision. Most services, however limited their resources, attempt to cater for a wide range of officers and members and are also concerned to break down artificial barriers which inhibit the free flow of information between disciplines. In a sense they are attempting to reflect the corporate philosophy in a tangible way by ensuring the widest possible distribution of information to all those who need it.

If it is accepted that particular kinds of information have a wide appeal across departmental boundaries, it is obviously an economic proposition to produce a standardised service of some kind and this, coupled with a belief in local government's need for current information, has led to the proliferation of bulletins. However, practical considerations may be even more pressing than these 'philosophical' justifications.

Many services, particularly those based in public libraries, are sited away from some or all of their customers so that a bulletin is the only practicable method of serving them on a regular basis. The size of the market adopted by most services is also an important factor since, if one sets out with the aim of serving every department in the authority, it is impossible, with current levels of staff, to provide a personalised or even group service. The more sophisticated services such as that in Cheshire have moved away from the broad based approach as indicated in the previous chapter, but they have been able to do this only by deliberately opting for a step-by-step approach to individual user groups which ensures that adequate resources are available to provide current awareness on a subject basis.

Another important reason for the early concentration on current awareness is the need to establish an image of positive service with as many users as possible. The inability of many authorities to realise the full potential of documentary information services and the consequent lack of status of librarians and other information providers means that the service must make a good impact right from the start to gain sufficient support to survive later on. A bulletin, particularly one based on press information, is an excellent method of establishing a reputation for positive service in bureaucratic organisations which are not normally known for their dedication to efficient information distribution.

PRESS BULLETINS

These are perhaps the most successful of all the current awareness services provided in local government in the sense that they do serve an apparently genuine need among many officers and members for regular information on national and local trends as reflected in the mass media. Press information also lends itself very well to a corporate, non-specialist

treatment since most people in local government are interested in a wide range of current affairs topics. Bulletins of this kind are produced in most of the sophisticated services (Berkshire, Cheshire, Derbyshire, Devon, the GLC, Birmingham, Tyne and Wear, Leicestershire, South Yorkshire, Wiltshire, Suffolk, etc.) and in some of the smaller services such as Doncaster, Gloucestershire, Barnsley and Bromley. In a few cases, to be discussed in a later chapter, bulletins are bought in from other authorities and reissued with local additions.

Public relations units also cover press information, usually in the form of a press cuttings service, and these often continue after the introduction of bulletins because they serve a rather different purpose. In most cases cuttings services concentrate on the activities of the authority itself, and reaction to them, while bulletins are designed to disseminate information on a wide variety of issues relevant to the authority which may concern national or regional trends, developments in other authorities and even in other countries. In some authorities information services have come to an agreement with public relations units so that the latter cover the local press and parochial issues while the former deals with the wider issues as expressed in the national papers. However, a few information services such as Leicestershire, Suffolk and Tyne and Wear cover both services.

Coverage—usually the serious national daily press (*The Times*, *Guardian*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Financial Times*); the major Sunday papers (*Sunday Times*, *Sunday Telegraph*, *Observer*); and, sometimes, the principal local papers, press notices and the less weighty weekly journals. In addition, daily bulletins may include details of relevant programmes on radio or television and of forthcoming Parliamentary debates.

Frequency—usually daily or weekly if covering the local press. Speedy production is essential if the bulletin is to be of maximum use, and those produced less often, such as the Greater Manchester Council's *Information Bulletin*, show a marked decline in user response. This implies concentrated effort on the part of professional information staff early in the morning to scan and abstract the press, and suggests that typing assistance on the spot is essential unless the service has clear arrangements with a typing pool on the priority to be allocated to its work. The need for a rapid response also requires efficient distribution systems and this may mean by-passing the internal mail system by personal delivery using clerical staff.

Press bulletins are not, therefore, a practical proposition for many of the smaller services unless they can call on the help of other members of staff not normally allocated to the local government information service. Suffolk, Doncaster and Gloucestershire produce

their press bulletins in this way quite successfully since the actual input of staff time in hours is not large enough although it may be very concentrated.

Format—the usual format is one A4 sheet containing between 20 and 25 entries numbered sequentially and arranged under standard subject headings which may need to be altered over time as topics of interest change. Sequential numbering enables easy retrieval of the cutting for photocopying in response to future requests. Abstracts are short, indicative and followed by an abbreviated bibliographical source. Brevity is essential in a throw-away service of this kind, implying that professional staff will often need to make decisions on the relative importance of several potentially relevant pieces of information. Very few services opt for comprehensiveness if this means a bulletin of more than two sides of A4, although rejected material may be saved and used as part of an SDI (Selective Dissemination of Information) service to specific individuals.

Most services try to develop an eye-catching heading for their bulletins with a memorable title (*Scan*, *Précis* and *Today's Press* are popular versions). A coloured heading is also a useful way of attracting attention and need not be too expensive. Other useful additions include a named contact for further information and a telephone number to ring for photocopies. These factors may seem trivial but a daily bulletin is often the standard bearer for the service and can make or mar a reputation by its appearance.

Back-up services—the speedy provision of photocopies of original cuttings in response to requests is also essential to the success of a daily bulletin and can be a time consuming process. Cuttings have to be maintained in sequential order, copied, distributed and possibly recorded for monitoring purposes. The original manuscript abstracts are also usually filed by subject to be used for future information retrieval. Although these are clerical activities they are central to the success of a current awareness service and should not be overlooked.

HANSARD BULLETINS

Information on current Parliamentary activities both in debate and Question Time is often valued in local government, particularly that given in Written Answers to questions which is often not available elsewhere. Some information services include Hansard information in their daily press bulletins but there is an increasing trend towards the production of specialist bulletins on a weekly or twice weekly basis. Examples include Cheshire's *Parliamentary Review*, Berkshire's *In Parliament*, Derbyshire's *Parliamentary Digest*, Leicestershire's *Scan in Parliament* and the GLC's

Weekly Parliamentary Supplement.

The format and production of Hansard bulletins are very similar to those of press bulletins although they are usually longer and tend to result in fewer actual requests for photocopies. One reason for this apparent lack of interest is the fact that most of the information given in, say, a Written Answer can be included in the abstract and there is less need to refer to the original. Those few services which have suggested the withdrawal of their Hansard bulletins have met with opposition from users who appear to find them useful as they stand without back-up information.

One difficulty in the production of these services is the fact that Hansard is not easy to scan or abstract and bulletins can take up a considerable amount of professional time for very little apparent return. In the GLC, for example, the *Weekly Parliamentary Supplement* absorbs up to two working days per week for the professional staff but requests remain static at between 15 and 30 per day.

With Britain's entry into the EEC there may be a trend towards similar services covering the *Official Journal* and the difficulties may be even greater with this publication. One authority, Mid-Glamorgan, does provide an EEC service from the intelligence unit although this takes the form of selective dissemination of information to individuals rather than a bulletin.

Some services also include details of new government publications in their Hansard bulletins and South Yorkshire's information section produces a regular specialist service covering statutory instruments and circulars. The GLC also includes details of these publications in its monthly *Urban Abstracts*.

ACQUISITIONS BULLETINS

With the advent of more sophisticated abstracting bulletins, simple lists of additions to library stock, without any form of abstract, have fallen somewhat into disrepute as have 'current contents' services (circulated photocopies of the contents pages of journals). However, one or two services such as Wiltshire, Berkshire, Newcastle and South Yorkshire do continue to produce them and in the case of Wiltshire the response to *Local Government Publications* is substantial. This may be because the service does not produce an abstracting bulletin except in the case of social welfare material.

In spite of the liking of librarians for sophisticated abstracting bulletins, a 'crude' service of the acquisitions bulletin type may be more effective because it is shorter and easier to use. The addition of the odd explanatory note to unhelpful titles will help but, in general, professional officers are perfectly able to judge the quality of a publication from the information given by the author, title and publisher. A study carried out in the DISISS (Design of Information Systems in the Social Sciences) series at Bath University seems to bear this out although it refers to

journal material rather than books and reports.⁸

This study looked at the relationship between the style and usefulness of abstracting and indexing bulletins in the planning field and involved the compilation of 48 different publications, based on the same source material, which differed in coverage, content of entry, frequency and degree of indexing. The results showed a distinction between expressed and actual preferences; most planners involved in the experiment said they would prefer styles which included detailed informative abstracts but, in practice, those with simple bibliographical citations proved the most useful. Similarly, many planners said they would like an index but in the event the inclusion of indexes did not seem to influence usefulness one way or the other. In general it appeared that one of the most important factors affecting the use of a bulletin was its length, and the study concluded that users gain greater satisfaction from a publication that is easy and quick to scan than from one which involves a lot of work on the part of the information officer.

JOURNAL BASED BULLETINS

Apart from press bulletins, journal based services are probably the most popular kind of current awareness service provided in local government and, as indicated in earlier chapters, it is here that the major criticisms of bulletins tend to be concentrated. Unlike press bulletins they are designed to disseminate the more 'technical' information contained in the professional journal literature and appeal mainly to officers, although some services have tried to interest members in them with mixed results. There are two major types.

Broad based bulletins

Broad based bulletins cover all or most of the subjects of interest to the authority and are usually arranged under broad subject headings (although Doncaster and Leicestershire arrange entries by journal title). Frequency varies from weekly to monthly, for example:

- Weekly : Leicestershire's *Scan Review*, Doncaster's *Analysis*; Derbyshire's *Weekly Annotations*; East Sussex's *Inform*; and Nottinghamshire's *Briefing*.
- Fortnightly : South Yorkshire's *Current Articles*; Gloucestershire's *Précis*; Lothian's *Current Awareness Service*; Birmingham's *Birmingham Briefing*; Newcastle's *Local Government Information*; Renfrew's *Information Bulletin*; West Midland's *Members' Information Service*; Bradford's *Local Government Information*; and Humberside's *Civic Index*.

Monthly : West Glamorgan's *Current Awareness Bulletin*; Berkshire's *In Perspective*; Devon's *Local Government Literature*; Hillingdon's *Local Government Index*; Hampshire's *Local Government*; Suffolk's *Technical Scan*; Liverpool's *Local Government Information Bulletin*; and the GLC's *Urban Abstracts*.

Subject based bulletins

There is an increasing trend towards subject based bulletins, perhaps best exemplified by Cheshire's decision to replace its monthly bulletin by a series of seven specialised bulletins ranging in frequency from weekly to three weekly. Examples include:

Weekly : Cheshire's *Planning Review* and *Social Services Review*.

Fortnightly : Cleveland's *Planning, Education and Social Services* bulletins; Sheffield's *Housing Information and Education Information*; and the co-operatively produced *Social Work Information Bulletin*.

Monthly : Wiltshire's *Social Services Abstracts*.

As the next chapter shows, some of these services are now being produced co-operatively by a number of authorities acting together, and some bulletins are also available for sale to be reprinted as they stand or used as the basis of local services. The ability to produce journal bulletins in this way indicates one of the aspects of these services which have attracted criticism; the fact that they duplicate each other to a considerable extent both in terms of the sources covered and the articles selected for inclusion.

The extent of duplication is in some ways surprising since the potential range of material is enormous; the GLC research library, for example, subscribes to about 600 journals and, while these are not all central to the work of local government, most of them do include material which could find a place in an abstracting bulletin. A small scale service cannot hope to cover all of these and in most cases they restrict themselves to the so-called 'core' journals and to certain subject areas. All over the country one finds bulletins covering the *Municipal Journal*, *Local Government Chronicle*, *County Councils Gazette*, *New Society*, etc. (journals which are often already in wide circulation in the authority) and concentrating on general local government issues, social services, education and a few other topics to the apparent exclusion of important areas such as planning and finance.⁹

This material is obviously of value in local government, but the principal function of a current awareness bulletin is not to remind users

about information they are already likely to have come across or to act as a check list against their own journal files, but to stimulate them into new thinking by expanding their knowledge of related fields. Co-operation can help, since it broadens the range of journals available to any individual information service, but only if the extra material is used in such a way that it can stimulate such thinking. In general terms this seems to imply the end of the broad based bulletin and the development of services aimed at more specific groups of user.

One justification for the all-purpose bulletin is that it reflects the corporate approach to activities by helping to break down artificial barriers between disciplines. This sounds laudable but there are a number of problems involved in such a strategy including the fact that the corporate approach rarely seems to apply below the level of elected member or chief officer. The average planner or architect is much more likely to respond to a current awareness service which is tailored specifically to his professional needs than a broad based bulletin which tries to be all things to all men. Cheshire's experience following the splitting of its bulletin into several subject sections seems to bear this out, although increased response is also due to other factors.

One factor is the size of the broad based service. Even with restrictions on subject and title coverage most monthly bulletins become too long for the average user to absorb easily, and his response is likely to be either rejection of the service or concentration on the section which comes nearest to his own needs. Any desire he might have had to 'think corporately' and read round related subjects is likely to evaporate in the face of the practical difficulties involved in keeping up with the mass of available literature, even when summarised in an abstracting bulletin.

The alternative of a series of subject based bulletins is much more attractive, provided suitable resources are available, and several authorities are moving towards such an approach. One of the more recent examples is Devon which is planning to use material from a co-operative abstracting scheme to develop several subject based services which will eventually replace the current monthly *Local Government Literature*. Subject based bulletins are usually produced more frequently than the all-purpose variety and are thus much shorter but can often include more useful information than the sections they replace. There will be less need to reject material simply in an attempt to keep the bulletin within manageable proportions, and the subject basis may well force information staff into a more careful appraisal of the kinds of material they select.

Selection is always a problem with journal based bulletins simply because there is so much to choose from and the potential subject field is so wide. There is also the problem of duplication in the literature itself, with one issue giving rise to a multitude of similar articles. The Community Land Act is a good example of this with dozens of articles describing the terms of the Bill and subsequent legislation, all of which

appear 'relevant' on the surface. *Urban Abstracts* included 50 articles on the Community Land Bill in 1975 and over 75 on the Act in 1975-76. At this level duplication suggests an unwillingness on the part of information officers to read any further than the title when selecting material for inclusion in a bulletin. This tendency could be equally possible in the compilation of subject based bulletins but the concentration on one particular area and one group of information users ought to promote a rather more discriminating attitude in selection.

Another criticism associated with journal bulletins produced at fortnightly or monthly intervals is their generally poor aesthetic quality. Librarians have paid some attention to the presentation of press bulletins because of their obvious publicity value but often seem to ignore this factor in less frequent bulletins. However, one might argue that it is even more important where more material is covered and the content of a bulletin is meaningless unless users can be persuaded to read it. Common errors include inadequate spacing between entries, poor page layout (often in an attempt to reduce the overall size of the bulletin), minimal use of changes in type face, lack of bold subject headings, and over-abbreviation of bibliographical references.

There will, however, always be a place for the broad based approach to information dissemination particularly where press information and other more ephemeral material are concerned. It is also true that certain types of user, notably elected members and officers at a senior level, require the corporate approach but, if these groups wish to be kept informed of technical developments in planning, architecture, management and other fields, they can be given access to a range of specialist bulletins. At lower levels information needs are still usually related to a specific subject area and current awareness is best conducted on this basis. This does not mean that a bulletin for planners should consist entirely of material from planning journals; specialist services should be used as a way of informing them of relevant developments in other disciplines.

One final criticism of 'technical' abstracting services is their apparent addiction to journals as the principal, if not the only, source of information on developments in local government disciplines. Few bulletins disseminate information on new books, pamphlets, government publications, conference proceedings, local government documents, theses and other numerous types of publication with relevance to their authorities, and those which do tend to relegate them to the back page and do not give them the added dignity of an abstract which is felt to be so essential where journal articles are concerned. Abstracts may not be necessary, but the second class status apparently accorded to non-serial publications by many services is disturbing—indicating a rather unbalanced attitude towards the literature. The importance of these other publications is perhaps illustrated by the Planning Exchange's *Information Bulletin* which

began life as a standard abstracting service concentrating principally on journals but has developed into a bulletin to disseminate the results of local government and other research in planning. As a result of discussions with users, planning journals have decreased markedly in importance not because the information contained in them is redundant but because professional planners are already well aware of it. What they require is a service covering the sources they are unlikely to see in the normal course of their work, hence the change in emphasis.

In view of the apparently considerable overlap of interests between authorities where journal literature is concerned, is there any case for a national abstracting service to cover the more commonly used sources and leave services free to concentrate on specifically local material? Many librarians argue that such a service is impractical because of the delays involved in disseminating material to users and that a regional approach, as used in the existing co-operative schemes, is the best answer. However, in some local authorities it may be easier in practice to get 100 or more copies of a bulletin produced within the authority than to get authorisation to buy in 100 copies of one produced elsewhere. Furthermore, little is known about the relative importance attached by users to currency and comprehensiveness in a journal abstracting service. More work would need to be done before any hard and fast conclusions could be drawn.

In present circumstances it seems likely that the main effort will continue to be at local and regional level in the absence of acceptable national alternatives. There are only three services available at a national level with anything like a claim to comprehensiveness and all of these have disadvantages. The Department of the Environment's *Library Bulletin* has the widest coverage but its size prohibits its use as a current awareness service except by librarians and the more information conscious officer. Its lack of regular and up-to-date indexes also reduces its value as a retrospective search tool, and some local services have stopped their subscriptions because of the difficulty of actually acquiring material cited in it. A national service, to be fully used, must be supported by an efficient loan or photocopy service and at the moment the Department of the Environment library is unable to guarantee this.

The GLC's *Urban Abstracts* is possibly more up-to-date than the *Library Bulletin* and does have a cumulative annual index of both subjects and corporate authors. However, its subject coverage is limited and there is a bias towards London and large metropolitan regions. The GLC also makes the computer produced index to its ACOMPLIS database available on subscription, but while this includes considerably more material than *Urban Abstracts*, it is obviously a retrospective search tool rather than a current awareness service. The acquisition of documents cited in *Urban Abstracts* can also be a problem since the GLC makes a special point of covering local government documentation and other more ephemeral material as well as the journal literature.

The only other service offering a broad coverage is *Local Government Annotations* (LOGA) produced by a consortium of London borough public libraries. However, its currency is relatively poor and there are no indexes to aid in retrospective literature searching. It also has a London bias and, although many authorities subscribe to it, few seem to make much positive use of it outside London, whereas Lewisham public libraries, for example, handle requests for about 2,000 photocopies per year in response to LOGA.

Specialised subject based abstracting services in the local government field are rare. The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors *Abstracts and Reviews*¹⁰ is useful in the field of valuation and related subjects and includes features other than simple abstracts. It is also well indexed. *Geo Abstracts*¹¹ also contains some useful sections but its indexes are often delayed. Birmingham public libraries produce two bulletins on air pollution and waste disposal, and the standard technical services such as *Engineering Index*¹² do cover material of use to local government. Recent introductions include the Department of Health and Social Security's *Social Service Abstracts*,¹³ with monthly indexes, and the Countryside Recreation Advisory Group's *CRRAG Abs.*¹⁴

Such nationally produced services cannot, therefore, be an answer to local current awareness needs at the moment, although they can be useful as literature searching aids to information handlers. National activity may well be better directed at improving the bibliographical control of the non-journal material, such as local government documentation, and this is discussed in more detail later.

OTHER KINDS OF CURRENT AWARENESS BULLETIN

The majority of services restrict themselves to press and journal based current awareness bulletins, but there are other examples of interest.

Bulletins covering council minutes

These are relatively uncommon and the examples which exist are confined to services based on research and intelligence units. In the West Midlands the Central Statistical Information and Research Unit produced a bulletin, *Dialogue*, at approximately two monthly intervals to keep Birmingham and West Midlands MPs up to date on the activities of the county council. This was initially a public relations exercise but some MPs appeared to find it useful as a source of local information.

In West Glamorgan the central research and intelligence unit is responsible for abstracting and circulating to chief officers the minutes of the four local district councils, but the most interesting example is probably that of South Yorkshire. Here the information section receives the minutes of each district council at intervals of four to six weeks and scans them for information relevant to the county council. Bulletins are produced covering each council and circulated to planners, engineers

and administrators. Response is encouraging and the professional time involved in compiling the bulletins is relatively small, about half a day per batch of minutes for each district.

Digests of committee decisions are also provided for members in some authorities such as Leicester City and Hampshire but these are not normally the responsibility of a documentary information service.

Legal information

Hull City's members' information service produces a weekly digest of cases for its customers, and bulletins of planning applications and appeals are also provided in some authorities, although this tends to be the responsibility of the planning or legal department rather than the information service. The Planning Exchange library in Scotland produces a regular *Scottish Planning Appeals Decisions* bulletin based on information from the Scottish Development Department which appears to be popular in local government.¹⁵

Statistical information

Services based on research and intelligence units sometimes produce statistical/narrative bulletins on issues of importance and statistical digests of the 'facts and figures' type, although these are normally the province of statisticians rather than librarians. The West Midlands, Tyne and Wear, Mid-Glamorgan, the GLC and West Glamorgan are among the authorities providing such services and, given the importance of statistical information in all local authorities, documentary services might well consider closer cooperation with their colleagues to improve its dissemination.

Research and survey information

A number of documentary services have been involved in the production of research registers and this is a common activity in research and intelligence units. However, a number are now introducing services to disseminate information about current work on a regular basis. The GLC research library has produced the *Boroughs Intelligence Newsletter* for some years as part of its services to the London boroughs and circulates some 1,800 copies (50 within the GLC itself). The bulletin describes current work in the GLC and gives a named contact for further information and also gives details of recent GLC publications, relevant conferences, etc. There are some difficulties with attempts to 'censor' information going outside the authority but in general the bulletin appears to be valued by the boroughs as one of their few tangible contacts with the GLC's research programme.

Cheshire county libraries also produce a *Research Review* mainly for internal distribution within the county council and Devon county libraries are planning a similar service.

General news

At departmental level librarians and other information handlers are some-

times involved in the production of staff newsletters, for example, in Sheffield's family and community services department. In Newcastle the management services information officer provides trade union representatives with information on trends affecting employment prospects. These are not normal 'library type' activities but are an important way of maintaining inter- and intra-departmental communications, and there is a clear necessity for greater involvement of information officers in this kind of work.

SELECTIVE DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION (SDI)

SDI has a long history in special libraries in the scientific and technical field and has been developed to a considerable degree of sophistication with the use of computer based systems. In local government it is much less complex and normally consists of little more than the routing of documents or other information to particular individuals on the basis of the information officer's knowledge of their particular interests. In some cases special stationery may be used to give the SDI service a brand image of some kind (the 'Fast Announcement' sheet, for example, which can be attached to a document or used instead of a conventional memo) but usually the service is highly informal.

Effective SDI depends on the information officer's ability to keep a close and continuous watch on his customers and, for this reason, tends to be restricted to senior officers or those with specialised interests. It is sometimes operated to complement current awareness bulletins in the sense that specialised material is excluded from bulletins and sent on a personal basis to those with a particular interest. One service, Suffolk, has deliberately opted for SDI in preference to a journal based bulletin for internal use on the grounds that the personal approach serves the user's information need rather better where technical information is concerned.

The GLC has experimented with computer based SDI using the ACOMPLIS system with rather mixed results. 'Profiles' of the user's information needs, as expressed in natural language keywords, are prepared and fed into the computer at regular intervals to be matched against its information store and the resulting print-out of references is automatically sent to the individual. Apart from the obvious disadvantage to the user that he receives references to material rather than the documents themselves, there are a number of technical disadvantages in computerised SDI in this field, the most important of which is the lack of rigid language control.

Terminology in the local government field changes constantly and 'concepts' are often extremely woolly; 'disadvantaged', for example, covers a multitude of social and economic factors and is quite likely to mean different things to different people. As a result the simple mech-

anical matching of terms often results in the retrieval of inappropriate information and may miss other references which could be of value. The lack of any structured thesaurus in the ACOMPLIS system magnifies this problem since similar concepts may appear under different terms and the information officer will need to consider a wide range of possibilities in building up a profile of the user's information needs.

Profiles in the local government field may also be extremely lengthy because of the wide range of user interests. For example, the profile of one of the GLC's 180 SDI customers who was interested in all aspects of the Thames ran to three A4 pages. Another problem is the need for constant updating which can prove extremely time consuming for information officers who are already faced with heavy on-the-spot demands for service. In practical terms SDI customers tend to be neglected once a profile has been worked out simply because they make no immediate demands on the information officer. As profiles become out-of-date the reputation of the service will decline unless they can be quickly revised. The inability of research library staff to do this on a regular basis is one of the reasons behind the abandonment of the mechanised SDI programme.

WARD PROFILES

The development of specialised information services for members on their wards is another aspect of positive information dissemination although most of the authorities involved have not gone beyond the initial collection of Census and other information necessary as a basis for such a service. Hull's members' information service provides a certain amount of manual SDI to members on the basis of ward interests, although the limited response has led to a reduction in this aspect of the service. Kirklees's members' service also provides SDI to a limited number of members although this covers general as well as specifically ward interests. Hammersmith's management information officer has been providing a ward information service based on pre-agenda items and committee decisions since December 1974.

North Tyneside's members' librarian, who is based in the public relations department with other members' services, is also developing ward 'dossiers' consisting of basic statistical information from the district council's departments on individual wards, other information on North Tyneside and the county of Tyne and Wear, and regular digests of council decisions. The 'facts and figures' part of the service has gone well but the digest is too recent an introduction to be assessed as yet.

The development of statistical profiles of wards is increasingly common among services based on research and intelligence units and Lewisham is among the authorities involved. The research and information unit of the chief executive's department, which is under the control of

a librarian, has produced individual ward reports consisting, at the moment, largely of Census information, but is to be extended in the future. Among the proposed additions are regular ward print-outs from the borough's computerised index to committee minutes.

Apart from committee minutes and Census data another obvious candidate for inclusion in a ward profile is local press information. One departmental information service, the data and monitoring group of Derbyshire county planning department, maintains a detailed index and store of information from all the county's local papers which is used as the basis of enquiry answering, SDI and current awareness bulletins in specialised fields.¹⁶ Among the occasional demands on this service are the preparation of ward profiles at election time and the production of district or area profiles on a more regular basis.

LITERATURE SURVEYS

One of the more recent developments in information dissemination in local government is the production of narrative literature surveys, supported by a conventional bibliography, on issues of particular interest to the local authority. In some ways these resemble the House of Commons library *Background Papers* and the *Biblio-Profiles* developed in the United States.¹⁷ The Department of the Environment library is also producing similar documents for internal use.

Bibliographies, whether annotated or simple lists of references, are a common library service but they are often inadequate as a method of informing members and senior officers about new areas of interest simply because they fail to place the literature in any context and present information in an indirect way. The literature review normally concentrates on the more significant recent material, presents it in a logical sequence and gives a basic outline of the topic or problem itself. As such it should be able to stand alone as a brief introduction to a subject while those people who require further information can refer to the original literature quoted in the bibliography.

The GLC research library introduced its series of *London Topics* in 1974 and by the spring of 1977 had produced about 20 covering issues as diverse as cable television and lead pollution.¹⁸ The aim of the *London Topic* is to provide members in particular with sufficient background knowledge on an issue to be able to participate intelligently in a debate or discussion and, as such, they are normally produced in advance of actual demands for information on the subject. Although produced initially to serve members' information needs, they have also proved popular with officers both in the GLC and the London boroughs and several have been reissued in new editions.

The only other information service to produce these on a regular basis is Leicestershire with its series of *Background Papers* on topics such

as devolution and neighbourhood councils. Each one is produced in a run of 1,000 copies which are distributed throughout the county council and to relevant interest groups.

Literature surveys are time consuming to produce and are not, therefore, practicable for the small service. They also require a good knowledge of the subjects involved, an ability to present an unbiased view of often controversial issues and a reasonable degree of literary skill. Timing is also essential because issues may become of crucial importance in a very short time (high alumina cement or asbestosis, for example) and an information service must have the resources to divert to this work at short notice if necessary. There are also certain dangers for a service that produces this kind of document because of the apparent failure of some officers and members to distinguish them from policy statements. It is absolutely essential for success that literature reviews are seen to be as politically unbiased as possible.

ENQUIRY ANSWERING SERVICES

The space given here to information dissemination activities of various kinds is a reflection of the importance attached to this aspect of their work by most services. However, information needs in local government are not confined to the need for up-to-date knowledge on new developments and trends; there is also the need for more detailed information on specific problems as expressed in *ad hoc* demands on a library or other parts of the local government organisation. Most documentary information services offer an 'on demand' enquiry answering service, but it rarely takes up as much time as information dissemination except in departmental libraries and the more sophisticated general service.

Many librarians argue that concentration on current awareness and document supply is forced on them by limited staff resources as well as adverse physical conditions which may entail them in providing a service to a remote clientele. This is particularly true of public library-based services without a separate staff allocation to deal with local government and the development of a personal enquiry service is certainly a slow and time consuming process. However, the development of such a service seems to be more closely related to the attitudes of information handlers than to simple questions of resource limitations, and the failure to move beyond broad based current awareness to the *ad hoc* provision of information is also evident in services with a relatively good command of resources.

In Berkshire, for example, the public library employs a full time local government librarian with part-time clerical and professional assistance but the service here is almost entirely confined to the production of bulletins. There is limited contact with users although the service is reasonably well situated in the Shire Hall complex and any enquiries

which do emanate from the authority are dealt with by the general reference library staff. As a result the local government librarian has only a limited idea of specific information needs in the authority although things may well improve, since in August 1976, a separate local government library was introduced.

This contrasts strongly with the picture in Devon where the public library also employs a local government librarian although in this case with no form of clerical back-up until recently. The librarian benefits from a good location in county hall and like his Berkshire equivalent produces a number of current awareness services which are to be extended in the near future. However, he has also made a point of encouraging officers to bring subject-based enquiries and other information problems to the library and tries wherever possible to develop personal contact with them, often on a quite informal basis. As a result he was dealing, in late 1976, with over 40 enquiries a month ranging from quick reference enquiries to detailed requests for information, many of a statistical nature.

A similar pattern can be seen in those services based outside public libraries. In Greater Manchester the information service is based on the research and intelligence unit and has built up a substantial stock of relevant documentation which could support an active enquiry answering service. However, it deals with very few subject based enquiries and only about two or three quick reference enquiries a day. In contrast the Tyne and Wear service, also based on the research and intelligence unit, claims to spend about two-thirds of its time on enquiry answering, in addition to producing two bulletins, and was receiving about 30 telephone calls and 30 visits a day in early 1977 from officers and members requiring information of one kind or another. However, its staff complement of two professional information officers is less than that in Greater Manchester.

The major factor in the development of successful enquiry answering services seems to be the willingness and ability of information staff to become personally involved with users on a day-to-day basis and the reasons for this are not too difficult to find. It has already been suggested that few people in local government see libraries, particularly public libraries, as sources of useful information and even fewer recognise librarians as information providers except in the somewhat limited sense of notifying current trends through the medium of bulletins. Many officers argue that a librarian has insufficient knowledge in areas like planning or road construction to be of much help in answering detailed technical enquiries, and the only way these attitudes can be overcome is by incontrovertible proof that they are misplaced.

The implications for the information handler are obvious. He must move out of the library and into the real world of local government and if he has 'no time' because of other commitments he should reappraise his work schedules. No service can maintain its relevance without con-

stant referral to users and this argument applies as much to current awareness bulletins as to enquiry answering. He must make a positive effort to find out the kinds of information problems facing his customers and gear his stock and services to them rather than to any idealised views of his own on their information needs. Finally he must 'sell' the service in whatever way he can to develop a reputation for efficient information provision as well as the simple supply of documents. The imaginative exploitation of documents in response to changing information needs is what constitutes the professional component of information work, and librarians who are unwilling to submit their expertise to this kind of test are failing in one important aspect of their responsibility to their users.

The GLC research library, on which so many information services are modelled, has always stressed the importance of a positive approach to individual information users, and much of its reputation is based on the early days when staff made a point of contacting them at every possible opportunity. Today there are seven professional information officers working principally on enquiry answering, and significant enquiries (those taking 20 to 30 minutes or longer) now amount to between two and three hundred a month. However, the willingness of information users, both in the GLC and in the London boroughs, to approach a now substantial information service is at least in part based on the original image established when the research library's staff resources were no higher than some of the more recently established services.

Experience shows that extensive resources are not always necessary for the development of a successful enquiry service and many small scale departmental libraries with professional staff spend the majority of their time on this activity. Devon has shown that one librarian working almost entirely alone can provide such a service and other example, such as the Kirklees members' information service and the East Sussex local government information unit, suggests that a small scale service is not condemned to serving the lowest common denominator of information need through a bulletin, provided it takes full advantage of the help provided by other parts of the library system. The Hull members' information service with two professional librarians deals with about 200 enquiries a month ranging from quick reference enquiries to detailed information problems relating to constituency complaints and policy issues.

It is a disturbing fact that so few authorities appear to view their documentary services as anything more than suppliers of documents and producers of bulletins, and even more disturbing that some librarians seem content to stay in the background and merely contribute to the overall pool of information available to their users. The development of a more positive role for the documentary service—in which information is used rather than simply supplied—will depend on a change in attitude away from the view of the information handler as a dispenser of documentary 'goodies' towards a situation in which information handler and

user work together to solve problems of real importance to local government and the community.

In those authorities which do provide an active enquiry answering service one can distinguish two main types of demand.

QUICK REFERENCE ENQUIRIES

These form the principal component of most enquiry answering services and consist of information requests that can be satisfied in a few minutes from standard published directories and other reference works as well as internal sources. Most services maintain a basic collection of telephone directories, gazetteers, and other standard works such as the *Municipal Yearbook*, *Who's Who* and *Local Government Companion* of obvious relevance to local government, and may also develop their own guides to material.

A subject index to a press bulletin is an excellent source of information for quick reference enquiries of the type 'I saw an article on . . . last week'. Most services keep the manuscript abstract slips of their daily bulletins, filed under their subject headings, for future information retrieval and the same applies to Hansard bulletins. Simple indexes to council minutes are also valuable for answering quick questions on recent policy decisions or other council activities. The Hull members' information service is one of the few to develop such a facility. Based on the terms used by committee clerks in preparing the minutes, this manually produced index is primarily used as a working tool in enquiry answering although back indexes are being printed to form a permanent record.

Other quick reference enquiries may deal with unpublished information about the authority itself and its activities; for example, queries such as 'Who deals with planning applications in X Ward?' or 'Who can I contact about general improvement area policy?' Local authorities are often large organisations and it can be difficult for an individual to keep up-to-date with changes in structures and personalities. An information service can make a valuable contribution to internal communications by maintaining a good knowledge of developments. In most cases this is done on an informal basis as a result of the information handler's contacts with users, but a few services have formalised the process by producing internal directories. Leicestershire's information service has produced directories with subject indexes which give basic information about the activities of individuals and sections in both the county council and districts and the Hull members' service is also responsible for producing the authority's internal directory and council yearbook.

SUBJECT ENQUIRIES

The degree of subject enquiry answering carried out by a service is heavily dependent on its ability to build up a climate of mutual trust between user and information handler and on the latter's knowledge of the subject

fields involved. In some of the more sophisticated services and in the better developed departmental library subject enquiry answering may be extremely time consuming and often involves the evaluation of published material as well as its simple identification. This is particularly so in the case of enquiry answering for members who are rarely satisfied with a pile of documents or a list of references and require information presented in a direct way. This can involve the extraction and summarising of information from a wide range of publications in the form of a background paper or speech, and information handlers may also have to take political factors into account in the collection and presentation of information. Some librarians argue that it is not their business to evaluate documents in this way but simply to make them available for the user to draw his own conclusions. However, if they are not prepared to use documents in this positive way their impact on local government is likely to be limited and libraries will continue to be thought of as little more than book dispensing agencies.

The sources used to answer enquiries are, of course, extremely wide, ranging from the library's own stock and current awareness bulletins (approached via information retrieval systems to be discussed later) to published indexes and abstracts, other information units and libraries with specialist knowledge, and personal contacts in the authority. The library itself is usually little more than a base from which to start, and all local government librarians providing an enquiry service stress the importance of developing good contacts with other information providers both inside and outside the authority. Documentary information, as argued several times before, is only one kind of information source used in local government and librarians must be aware of others if they are to provide a full service. This implies the development of good working relationships with statisticians, committee clerks, other librarians and a whole range of officers in the authority with specialist knowledge on particular topics.

It is important to remember that a significant proportion of information need in local government is concerned with specifically local issues and that requests cannot always be satisfied by the librarian's time honoured method of a search through the relevant literature. Much of the information required by, for example, an elected member will be contained in internal reports and unpublished statistics, and in the heads of particular officers and the information handler's professional expertise lies in knowing which of a range of contacts can satisfy a particular need. The referral of enquiries to other information sources is a characteristic of local government information services and this does not imply any criticism of librarians; indeed, the referral of information users to sources where they will receive the quickest and most comprehensive answer to their problems is a much more 'professional' approach to the job than attempting to solve every enquiry oneself, regardless

of ability.

'Technical' enquiries from officers on, for example, recent developments in bus design or pedestrianisation schemes in European countries are more amenable to the librarian's standard approach of a literature search, although the absence of high quality indexing and abstracting services can make this difficult. However, referral to relevant experts also plays a part here, particularly referral to officers working on similar problems in other authorities or in specialised academic or government research organisations. Again the absence of up-to-date and comprehensive research registers, even at the level of individual authorities, throws the information handler back on his own resources in developing a good picture of current work.

The presentation of information in response to detailed enquiries is important, particularly where senior officers and elected members are concerned. At lower levels a simple list of references or pile of documents may be sufficient for an officer working on a particular research project over a period of time although even here the direct presentation of information is often preferred, hence the popularity of literature reviews of the *London Topics* variety. However, standard bibliographies can still be of value and some services such as the GLC research library, East Sussex's local government information unit and Wiltshire's local government library do produce them in response to specific enquiries or in cases where one issue is giving rise to a large number of similar requests for basic information. The most useful general rules in information presentation are brevity and directness—never provide two articles where one will do; always indicate the relevant sections of a book or report; provide documents rather than references to documents wherever possible; and summarise information and arguments in documents if necessary.

There are one or two difficulties in enquiry answering for local government officers and members which may be worth emphasising. The speed of response required from information officers is one, and this is particularly evident at member and senior officer level where users may have to respond to rapid changes in political circumstances or events outside the control of the authority. The 'crisis' enquiry is common in local government and requires adaptability on the part of the information handler as well as quick reflexes. Another problem is the tendency of some officers and members to demand information which does not exist in a conventionally published form or is otherwise difficult to identify and acquire. This is less of a problem at the level of practising planner, architect, etc., where officers are working on specific projects within easily definable boundaries, but it can create difficulties higher up the management structure.

Crisis-type enquiries, for example, often concern issues which have not proved important before and are thus not catered for in the infor-

mation handler's stock or network of personal contacts. (Examples might include information on building security following bomb threats.) In some cases enquiries can relate to a genuinely unforeseen development which may not be covered by the literature to any great extent (building failure due to the breakdown of high alumina cement, for example). Elected members can often cause problems in this respect because of their interest in service deficiencies or areas where the authority has apparently failed to recognise a problem. One concrete example of this arose when a member, worried at the growing amount of empty shop property in the centre of his town, requested details of exactly how many buildings were involved only to be told that the authority had never thought it worthwhile to collect such statistics. The demand for up-to-date and very localised information can also cause problems, particularly where statistics are involved, because of the lack of currency of many statistical sources and the fact that very few cover small geographical areas.

OTHER SERVICES

Document supply, current awareness bulletins and enquiry answering cover most of the service provided by present-day documentary information services but there are one or two other facilities which are worth noting.

INDEXES TO INTERNAL DOCUMENTATION

These will be discussed in more detail in the chapter on local government documentation and are merely noted here. Computer based indexes to council and committee minutes are provided in a few authorities including the GLC, the London Borough of Lewisham, West Midlands County Council and Cleveland County Council. A manual index on cards has been developed in Hull and the Lothian Regional Council's members' services unit is indexing minutes on this basis back to May 1975. South Yorkshire County Council has developed an index to policy decisions which involves the extraction of items with policy implications from council minutes, their indexing using a standard thesaurus and entry onto an optical coincidence card system.

One or two librarians have also been involved in the development of indexing systems for departmental files and in at least one case (the Lothian Regional Council physical planning department) the librarian is also responsible for maintaining files.

UNION CATALOGUES

Some services, particularly those based on public libraries, have undertaken to produce union catalogues of documentary holdings in their authorities. They include Bromley, Cambridgeshire and Lewisham public

libraries (union catalogues of journals held by departments) and the GLC research library (union catalogue of journals held by departmental libraries plus the inclusion of some departmental library holdings on the ACOMPLIS database).

AUDIO-VISUAL AND OTHER NON-DOCUMENTARY INFORMATION SOURCES

Slide collections are maintained by some services (GLC, Cheshire, etc.) usually for the benefit of officers giving lectures inside or outside the authority, and a few have experimented with tapes. East Sussex's local government librarian has made a special point of acquiring commercially available tapes on subjects of interest on the grounds that they may be a better way of presenting information to members than the traditional documentary methods.¹⁹

Microforms are also assuming greater importance with the increasing amount of local government literature and as a result of the space problems facing many services. Again the GLC research library is prominent in this field. It has a continuous microfiche programme covering early pamphlet stock, back files of articles from *Urban Abstracts* and the *Daily Intelligence Bulletin*, GLC publications such as *Research Memoranda* and *Research Reports*, some of the earlier volumes in the statistics collection, and specialised material including the transcripts of the public inquiry into the *Greater London Development Plan*, reports produced by the Standing Council on London and South East Regional Planning, and those emanating from the National and Local Government Statistical Liaison Committee.

SPECIALISED SERVICES

A few units maintain specialised services on issues of particular local or regional importance. The West Glamorgan service, based on the research and intelligence unit, has developed a specialised collection on Celtic Sea oil exploration and Devon's local government librarian is planning to introduce a separate current awareness bulletin for the recently formed South West Energy Group.

MEMBER SERVICES

A number of the members' information services based in central chief executive's departments or departments of administration also offer other services to members including typing facilities, arrangements of transport, Ansaphone services, payment of expenses, etc., and information staff frequently become involved in these activities either directly or in a supervisory capacity. It is significant that members' information services which also offer other facilities (Lothian and Hull, for example) are likely to be more heavily used than those which restrict themselves to simple information provision, perhaps because they appear to be more relevant to real needs. An information officer who can not only answer

a constituency query but also arrange for a letter to be sent and organise accommodation for a local surgery is a great deal more useful to a busy member than one who is strictly 'professional' in outlook and refuses to do anything but information work. It is also true that the all-purpose approach to members' services instills into the councillor a belief that information is just another aspect of member support and not a thing to be feared or distrusted.

Other possibilities which have all been tried at one time or another include visual displays illustrating particular issues or council policies, data inventories of unpublished information held in departments, a central register of local government's own documentation, a translations service, speech writing for members, cataloguing the stocks of departmental libraries and seminars for information users.

INFORMATION RETRIEVAL SYSTEMS

The British Library project, on which this book is based, did not involve a detailed examination of retrieval systems and this section does little more than indicate the kinds of methods employed.

CONVENTIONAL CLASSIFICATION SYSTEMS WITH CARD CATALOGUES

The majority of public library based services which benefit from centralised bibliographical services conform to the classification and cataloguing system used in the other parts of the public library system, the Dewey Decimal classification with an author and subject catalogue. Some also include a title catalogue. The other widely used system is the Universal Decimal Classification (UDC) which is used by the GLC research library for its bookstock and by a number of other services such as the Lothian members' information unit and parts of the Cheshire service. In both cases the classification system tends to be modified or simplified in line with the size of the collection and in neither can the system be said to be ideally suited to local government literature.

In many cases the classification system is little more than a shelf arrangement device and detailed subject access to the literature is through specialised indexes or, more usually, the personal knowledge of the information officer. A considerable proportion of the literature, including many government publications, journals and report series, is not classified but simply kept in alphabetical or serial number order. Many local government librarians pay minimal attention to the problems of formal information retrieval and try to reduce the amount of time spent on this activity because it often appears unproductive. In many cases document collections are so small that the librarian can know his stock fairly intimately without the aid of a catalogue; the same applies to information users searching for material. A detailed arrangement is not necessary when there are only a few items on any one subject.

Perhaps more important is the kind of use the collection receives. If the service is mainly in the business of current awareness and the supply of specific, named documents (as most are), there is little need for a system which enables detailed subject access to the literature. All that is necessary is a simple system enabling the librarian or user to go to the right shelf for a document or to locate it if it is not there. It is only when collections expand in size or when the service is faced with detailed enquiries that an effective method of subject access is necessary and in most cases a simple author/title catalogue is usually sufficient.

UNCONVENTIONAL CLASSIFICATION SYSTEMS

These are mainly confined to departmental libraries where the broad based classification systems are even less suited to the literature; they usually try to overcome the disadvantages of a strictly hierarchical system by employing some kind of post co-ordinate approach (i.e. the ability to join single concepts to make new terms). Examples include the planning thesaurus developed by Essex county planning department in the late 1960s and still used in Hampshire's planning library, and the linked classification/thesaurus developed by Brenda White in her most recent research project on planning information provision²⁰ and used in East Sussex's planning department, the Lothians physical planning department and Newcastle's management services department. Access is by card catalogues or by optical coincidence card systems which enable rather greater flexibility in searching for particular subjects.

The disadvantage of these systems seems to be that the size of most departmental collections does not warrant the time needed to maintain them. Brenda White's classification/thesaurus is praised by many departmental librarians but they argue that it is too complex for the average library and that many untrained information staff would find it difficult to apply. Some have developed their own systems with the accent on simplicity, including the librarian in Tayside Regional Council planning department who has produced a simple alpha/numeric system, based on the planners' own views on the most useful arrangement, which is used both for library stock and all departmental files.

MANUAL SUBJECT INDEXES

These are common methods of access to the press and journal literature as indicated earlier and often prime sources in enquiry answering. They normally consist of a simple card index based on an agreed list of subject terms, often subdivided by geographical area, which reflect the terminology used in the literature itself. The quality of indexing is often extremely crude by 'professional' standards, but the principal aim is to create a working tool that can be used easily by both information handlers and users. In most cases they are of relatively short duration since the majority cover ephemeral press or Hansard information. In this situation purity

of indexing is relatively unimportant since the searcher can usually remember the idiosyncracies of the system while he is using it.

It can be extremely difficult to maintain consistency in a manual subject index because of the continuous changes in local government terminology and this can cause difficulties for services which use such indexes as a basic retrieval tool. In Cheshire, for example, conventional classification schemes are used entirely as shelf arrangement devices; subject access to the stock of the service's three libraries is through a manual subject index on cards. The index is now being split up according to the subject speciality of each library and is undergoing some rationalisation in the process, including the subdivision of terms which have become overloaded with entries and the amalgamation of synonyms. At the moment the index appears to work quite successfully as a retrieval tool but there is an obvious need for some method of mechanical sorting as it becomes larger and more cumbersome.

KWIC AND KWOC INDEXES

The simplest computer produced indexes used in local government information services are Key-Word In Context and Key-Word Out of Context indexes, both of which give access to documents by subject to a certain degree. The principle of IBM (KWIC) is the rotation of a string of words (in this case titles) and the production of an index entry under each word excluding those which the indexer designates as 'stop words'. The principal advantages of KWIC are its cheapness and simplicity; no professional indexing decisions are involved apart from the initial list of stop words which are to be ignored by the computer in producing the index. A clerical officer can quite easily produce and update such indexes after initial training. The disadvantages are appearance and crudity—the quality of a KWIC index as a subject index to the literature is dependent on the quality of titles, although extra explanatory terms can be added, and there is no control of the vagaries of natural language which can place similar subjects under widely varying descriptors.

The GLC research library has made considerable use of KWIC indexes and continues to produce them even with the advent of the more sophisticated ACOMPLIS retrieval system. In the past, KWIC indexes were the only form of subject access to the library's extensive pamphlet stock which is arranged simply in sequential number order. KWIC was used as the method of indexing the massive *Greater London Development Plan* Inquiry transcripts.²¹ It is also used for council minutes, slides, National and Local Government Statistical Liaison Committee papers and one or two outside contracts including the library of the Standing Conference on London and South East Regional Planning which is recorded as a KWIC index updated each year.

The research and information unit of Lewisham London Borough also uses KWIC and KWOC as a means of indexing council and comm-

ittee papers—producing a KWIC index covering all committees and KWOC indexes for individual ones. This programme was instituted with the advice of the GLC research library and is a good example of inter-authority cooperation on information provision.

OTHER COMPUTER BASED INFORMATION RETRIEVAL SYSTEMS

The only fully operational computerised storage and retrieval system in Britain in this field at the moment is the ACOMPLIS system developed by the GLC research library. Based on the ICI ASSASSIN package, ACOMPLIS (A COMputerised London Information System) relies on natural language with control over synonyms. It is, at the moment, a batch processing system, although ICI is expected to introduce an on-line version of ASSASSIN in the fairly near future.

The system was purchased in 1972 at a cost of £5,000 and by the spring of 1977 included some 30,000 items increasing at about 1,000 per month. The majority of documents coming into the research library, with the exception of ephemeral press material, are entered in the system, but it now also includes details of the stocks of some of the other libraries in the GLC and seems to be developing into a GLC catalogue rather than the urban database as first envisaged. The total capacity of the system is about 60,000 items and the research library expects to exhaust it within three years. By that time on-line ASSASSIN will be available but it is possible that by then the GLC may wish to opt for something rather more sophisticated.

The technical aspects of ACOMPLIS have been described elsewhere²² but it may be worthwhile outlining the services it can provide.

KWOC indexes produced either in printed form or as Computer Output Microfilm (COM) and covering subject keywords (uncontrolled, natural language), personal names, corporate names and place names. These can also be cumulated within one alphabetic sequence and this is the kind of index produced for internal use in the GLC and for outside organisations on subscription. The index is apparently popular with research library users and highly valued by some outside subscribers in spite of its relative crudity. For example, there is no synonym control in the index so that manual searchers are forced to consider all possible terms which might be used to describe their particular subject.

The potential to give regular SDI print-outs of items with full abstracts and instructions on how to obtain cited documents. As indicated earlier the research library is no longer using this facility.

Literature searching for GLC officers and members, London boroughs

and other organisations (the latter on payment of a fixed charge). Although a batch processing system, there are rarely any delays in receiving print-out from ACOMPLIS and searches can be submitted in the library itself through an IBM CMCT (Communicating Magnetic Card Typewriter). Many subject enquiries can, of course, be satisfied by a search of the COM index, but in March 1977 research library staff submitted over 40 searches for internal and external customers.

ACOMPLIS can also enable the semi-automatic production of abstracting bulletins; *Urban Abstracts* is produced in this way. By using the Communicating Magnetic Card Typewriter the ACOMPLIS abstract can be denuded of the special characters necessary for computer input and reproduced in upper and lower case ready for photo-reduction and offset lithographic printing.

There are, of course, problems with ACOMPLIS including the 'bugs' inherent in any system, but its major drawback is related to the decision taken early on to opt for a system with limited language control. The failure to develop some kind of structured thesaurus is now proving a distinct disadvantage to users of the COM index because of the resultant scatter of terms caused by inconsistent indexing decisions and variable approaches to the truncation of terms. Thus material on mentally disabled people may appear under mentally disabled, mentally handicapped, mentally ill, mental defective, subnormal, educationally subnormal and any number of similar terms, all closely related and sometimes synonymous. Similarly, material on pollution may appear under pollution, poll, pollut, etc., according to variable decisions on the truncation of terms.

As a result of these inconsistencies the KWOC index can be inefficient and the chance of a relatively inexperienced officer or member retrieving all the information on a given concept is slight. A greater degree of formality seems necessary although the problems involved in developing a workable thesaurus may be even greater than those of the existing system.

Other systems under consideration by local government information services include IBM STAIRS. This is an on-line system employing natural language and is considerably more sophisticated and expensive than ASSASSIN. Search strategies are more flexible and computer entries can be updated or corrected directly at a terminal which includes a visual display unit. The GLC is currently providing computer services for an experiment using STAIRS to index legislation and EEC information for the House of Lords and, if the system is retained after the end of the experiment, it may be considered as a successor to ACOMPLIS. Cheshire County Council also has access to STAIRS but the information service could not justify using the system when it was investigated a year or two ago. Other authorities including the West Midlands have also rejected STAIRS as too expensive and complex for a single authority.

REFERENCES AND NOTES

- 1 DEPARTMENTS OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT. Headquarters Library. *Library bulletin*. Fortnightly. (Available on subscription from the DoE/Tp Headquarters Library, Marsham Street, London SW1).
- 2 GREATER LONDON COUNCIL. Research Library. *Urban Abstracts*. Monthly with cumulative annual subject and corporate author indexes. (Available on subscription from the GLC Bookshop, County Hall, London SE1).
- 3 PLANNING EXCHANGE. *Information Bulletin*. Weekly. (Available from the Planning Exchange, 186 Bath Street, Glasgow G2 4HG).
- 4 LONDON BOROUGH OF HAVERING and others. *Local government annotations service*. Monthly. (Available from London Borough of Havering, Central Library, Romford, Essex RM1 3AR, on subscription.)
- 5 PRATT, G.E.C. and FERGUSON, H.A. A study of the information needs of London's local government officers. *GLC Research Memorandum*, 433, December 1973.
- 6 GRAYSON, L. Urban documentation; its nature and purpose. *Journal of Librarianship*, October 1975, 7(4), pp 229-251.
- 7 PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION. *Net book agreement, 1957 (M. and N.M.); authorisation of grant to libraries of discount on net books. Library licence; terms and conditions*. Publishers Association, 1957.
- 8 BATH UNIVERSITY LIBRARY. *Design of information systems in the social sciences. The relationship between the usefulness and style of secondary publications; an experimental information service for planners*. Bath University Library, 1974. (Research Reports: Series B No.3.)
- 9 These conclusions on subject restrictions in current awareness bulletins are taken from the interim report of a project financed by the Leverhulme Trust and based at the Planning Exchange entitled Research Requirements for Urban and Regional Planning in Scotland Following Local Government Reorganisation. A little more information on this project is given in the next chapter.
- 10 ROYAL INSTITUTION OF CHARTERED SURVEYORS. *Abstracts and reviews*. Monthly.
- 11 *GEO abstracts*. Norwich, University of East Anglia, Geo Abstracts. 8 parts each bi-monthly.
- 12 *ENGINEERING Index*. New York, Engineering Index Incorporated. Monthly with annual cumulation.
- 13 DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SECURITY. Library. *Social service abstracts*. Monthly with subject index. (Available from the DHSS Library, Alexander Fleming House, Elephant and Castle, London SE1 6BY.)
- 14 COUNTRYSIDE RECREATION RESEARCH ADVISORY GROUP. *CRRAG Abs*. Monthly. (Available from the Editor, Recreation News, John Dower House,

Crescent Place, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire GL50 3RA.)

- 15 PLANNING EXCHANGE. *Scottish planning appeal decisions*. Quarterly. (Available from the Planning Exchange, 186 Bath Street, Glasgow G2 4HG.)
- 16 WHITE, B. 'Selling' qualitative information. *Burisa Newsletter*, July 1976, (23), pp 8-9.
- 17 LUNIN, L.F. The Biblio-profile—a two-in-one package of information; its preparation, production, marketing, uses. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science*, March/April 1976, 27(2), pp 113-117.
- 18 GOMERSALL, A. *The single homeless*. In Social planning; sources of information; proceedings of a one day conference held at the Library Association, London, 29 October 1974, edited by Lesley Grayson. Library Association Reference, Special and Information Section, 1975, pp 44-55. (Describes some of the problems involved in producing a *London Topic* under this title.)
- 19 TRIPP, A. Audio-cassettes for local government information. *Assistant Librarian*, January 1977, 70(1), pp 6-7.
- 20 WHITE, B. *Information for planning—studies towards the collection, organisation and dissemination of information for planners; report of studies*. Edinburgh University Planning Research Unit, June 1974. (OSTI Report No.5198)
- 21 THOMAS, P.A. A KWIC index to the GLDP Inquiry transcripts. *GLC Intelligence Unit Quarterly Bulletin*, March 1973, (22), pp 5-11.
- 22 THOM, W. ACOMPLIS—a computerised information service. *Greater London Intelligence Quarterly*, March 1975, (30), pp 15-17.

Co-operation Between Information Services

Joint activity by a number of authorities in the provision of local government information services is a relatively new phenomenon and one which has grown out of a belief that there exists within the local government literature a significant proportion of material which is of common interest. It has been given impetus by the financial restrictions now placed on information services and by the librarian's traditional will to share resources and expertise with other colleagues.

All existing co-operative schemes of a formal kind are concerned with the abstracting of 'core' local government journals to produce 'databases' of information to help in enquiry answering or to form the basis of general or specialist current awareness bulletins. Some schemes involve the bilateral exchange of information while others adopt a 'consortium' approach covering a number of authorities within a particular geographical area. In these the abstracting of material which is believed to be of common interest to all the participants is shared out among them and the resulting package of references is available to use as they see fit.

The general argument put forward in favour of greater co-operation in the coverage of published information is the existence of two levels of information need within local government:

documentary information needs common to all authorities, or at least all authorities within a particular geographical area;

documentary information needs specific to each authority which can only be satisfied at the local level.

Co-operative coverage of the first will hopefully release resources at the local level which can then be used to cater for the second in a more efficient or effective way. The major aim is to broaden the user's information horizons by giving him access to relevant material from non-local

sources while enabling the information service to focus on specific local needs.

Although the degree of common interest has never been quantified, it is believed to be large enough to render individual attempts to cover all the literature uneconomic and wasteful of staff resources. One current research project carried out by the Planning Exchange in Scotland has looked at the journal coverage of six weekly current awareness bulletins produced over a four week period. It found that of the 112 journal titles covered 39 (35 per cent) were listed by at least two bulletins. It also found that 74 per cent of the articles listed came from these 39 journals and concludes that information services could save both time and effort by co-operating more closely on the coverage of such titles.¹

It is important to remember, however, that analyses carried out simply on the basis of raw figures of this kind can be misleading since, for example, the number of times articles from a particular journal are included is obviously closely related to the frequency of that journal. Nevertheless, this small scale study does give some indication of the likely overlap between services and the potential for greater co-operation coverage of titles of common interest.

The discussion of co-operative activity will include agreements between two authorities on the re-use of material as well as those involving several participants. Although the former are not always strictly co-operative they are based on the belief in a common area of interest between authorities with similar problems and, as such, it seems appropriate to include them in any assessment of co-operative activity.

RE-USE OF MATERIAL PRODUCED BY OTHER AUTHORITIES

GREATER LONDON

Under Section 7 of the London Government Act 1963 the Greater London Council was empowered to establish an organisation to conduct research and collect information on any matter relating to Greater London.² As a result the GLC intelligence unit was set up and this later included the GLC research library which provides documentary information services to the members and officers of the GLC and to the London boroughs. In keeping with the spirit of the Act the research library makes its services available free to the boroughs and these include a wide range of bulletins³ which may be used by the boroughs as they wish. In most cases boroughs simply receive copies of bulletins for distribution but others have responded by re-using material in their own services.

Complete reprinting of bulletins at borough level

The London Borough of Bromley's central library receives the research library's *Daily Intelligence Bulletin* (DIB) which is reprinted by the borough's management services unit for distribution to 50

officers and 30 members. The central library produces a local press bulletin each week to supplement the more general material contained in the *DIB*.

This is a continuation of an experimental service run some years ago when Bromley received the *DIB* via a tele-facsimile link and reproduced it for distribution on the same day it was produced.⁴ Response to the bulletin remains good in spite of the delay introduced by a change to postal delivery.

Re-use of GLC material at borough level

The GLC has always tried to encourage boroughs to extract material from its bulletins for re-use in their own services and a number have responded.

The London Borough of Hammersmith used material from the *DIB* in its bulletin *Spectrum*. This has now been discontinued but GLC material may be included in a revived version.

The London Borough of Lewisham uses material from the *DIB* and *Weekly Parliamentary Supplement* in its bulletin *Précis* issued by the public library's commercial and technical reference service.

The London Borough of Hillingdon uses material from *Urban Abstracts* in its monthly *Local Government Index* issued by the libraries and publicity department.

The London Borough of Haringey is introducing a pilot current awareness service which will be largely based on material from the *DIB* but will include local items as well.

AUTHORITIES OUTSIDE GREATER LONDON

In other parts of the country where arrangements like those between the GLC and the London boroughs do not apply, the re-use of material is organised on an exchange or direct charge basis.

Exchange

Birmingham public libraries' science and technology department has developed a relatively sophisticated local government information service on the basis of exchanging two specialised technical abstracting services for other bulletins in areas where the department has limited experience or stock.

The GLC's *Urban Abstracts* is reprinted for bulk distribution to about 60 officers and members in Birmingham District Council,

the West Midlands County Council, the Regional Health Authority and family advice centres in the area. In return the GLC is provided with copies of the department's *Air Pollution and Noise Bulletin* which is circulated to officers in the scientific branch of the Director General's department.⁵

Leicestershire libraries and information service's daily press bulletin, *Scan*, is telexed daily from Leicester and local items added by the Birmingham public libraries' local studies department. It is reprinted and distributed to about 60 officers and members in Birmingham District Council.

A number of other abstracting services are received on exchange agreements (Wiltshire county library's *Social Services Abstracts*, Cheshire county libraries' *Architectural Review*, Sheffield public library's *Housing Information*, etc.)

No other local government information service relies to such an extent on the direct use of services produced by other authorities, but Birmingham is unusual in having something concrete to offer in exchange. As a result it is able to capitalise on its own expertise in science and technology to gain access to services which it could not possibly produce from its own resources.

Direct charging

Other local government information services with little to offer in an exchange agreement have to rely on the willingness of more established services to make their material available if it is paid for. Unfortunately few do at present, often because they feel that their services are too local in character to have a wide appeal. Leicestershire libraries and information service and the GLC research library are among the few services with a coherent approach to the sale of their current awareness and other documentary services but their experience does indicate that bulletins produced for a specifically local market can have considerable impact elsewhere.

Leicestershire offers its bulletins to other organisations in various ways and charges an economic rate. A number have responded arguing that the costs of producing their own service will greatly outweigh those of buying in. In addition the use of a ready made bulletin enables them to concentrate on local material which can be used to supplement the outside service. Leicestershire sells its bulletins either as the finished product (for reproduction if required) or in the form of photocopies of the manuscript abstract cards. The daily press bulletin is available by Telex and first class post; other bulletins by post only. A charge is made for a reproduction licence and this varies

according to the size and frequency of the bulletin.

Subscribers normally receive their material no later than a day after publication in Leicestershire and, according to the level of subscription paid, may receive it on or before the day of publication.

The GLC research library also offers a number of its bulletins for sale to outside organisations through a rather more conventional subscription service. *Urban Abstracts*, for example, has attracted over 200 subscriptions, some of them from overseas organisations. Local authorities, development corporations and passenger transport executives account for over 60 of the UK subscriptions—almost half of these come from public libraries but a significant number, 19, come from planning departments. Nearly 50 authorities, excluding the London boroughs, who receive it automatically, take *Urban Abstracts*, some in multiple copies, ranging from large urban authorities like Cleveland and Merseyside to largely rural counties such as Wiltshire and Devon. The research library also offers the COM (Computer Output Microfilm) index to its ACOMPLIS database for sale to outside organisations. The *Daily Intelligence Bulletin* has also been offered for sale but its distribution has been delayed because of administrative problems.

Direct charging as a means of enabling other authorities to benefit from the services of a more established unit has much to recommend it. Exchange agreements are rarely entirely satisfactory because they are so often one-sided, particularly in those cases where bulletins are exchanged for services other than publications (help with enquiries, etc.). It is for this reason that some authorities are trying to reduce their exchange commitments in favour of a more 'commercial' approach.

Charging can reduce 'frivolous demand' from organisations which enter into agreements and make little use of the material acquired other than including it in their own collections. Subscription arrangements may also be simpler to operate since they can be incorporated into an organisation's general ordering procedure. In authorities where material is offered for outside use, charging may enable the information unit to offload distribution and all the associated clerical effort to an existing publications unit in the authority. Such an arrangement might also enable the information unit to benefit from marketing and publicity expertise in the authority.

However, exchange agreements of one kind or another do still have an important part to play in the bilateral exchange of information. The Birmingham/GLC and Birmingham/Leicestershire experiences show that such agreements can be of comparable value to both sides, and this may be even more likely where publications other than secondary services are offered in exchange. One county council planning department is offering its current awareness bulle-

tin to districts in exchange for their internal publications in the planning field, and similar agreements operate between information units and some commercial organisations with a substantial publications programme.

There are also certain organisations which are unable to pay an economic rate for outside services, particularly voluntary bodies and local pressure groups. An information unit may well want to develop contact with these bodies in order to broaden its access to local, and probably unpublished, sources of information and will offer a bulletin in exchange for less tangible services. Leicestershire libraries and information service has adopted this approach in its attempts to build up a service providing information to the community as well as local government.

In current economic circumstances many local authorities are also unwilling to pay increased subscription rates and exchange agreements may well make something of a comeback. The Department of the Environment, for example, is apparently extending its exchange programme in the light of increases in the price of its *Library Bulletin*.

The buying in of bulletins produced outside, or their exchange for other products, is a useful tactic in the provision of local government services, but it is important to remember that it can only supplement a local service, not replace it. The widest markets may well be for subject based 'technical' bulletins for practising planners, architects and other officers who need access to information without obvious geographical connotations.

One or two local government librarians have raised the problem of copyright in the exchange and reprinting of abstracting and other current awareness services. This is a difficulty faced by most information services including those in local government where the pressure to make information as widely available as possible is increasing. Leicestershire libraries and information service, as indicated earlier, includes a reproduction licence in its charges. The GLC makes no special arrangements for the re-use of material by the London boroughs but in the case of Birmingham public libraries an agreement was drawn up stipulating that the reprinted *Urban Abstracts* would not be re-sold or made available outside the Birmingham area. Judging from experience with the general range of publications produced by local government, it would appear that few have a clear idea of the nature of copyright and this may need to be considered more seriously at a later date.

THE CONSORTIUM APPROACH

The bilateral exchange of information between local government information services has a fairly long history and is often conducted on an in-

formal basis. The consortium approach involves a formal co-operative agreement between authorities, usually within a relatively compact geographical area, and consists in general terms of the following:

agreement on a list of journals held by the participating units which are of general interest to all the authorities in the scheme;

the sharing out of titles among participants according to the particular expertise, stock holdings and available time for abstracting;

agreement on a method of recording individual articles;

agreement on methods of producing the final bulletin(s) or 'database';

agreement on methods of providing copies of articles in response to requests from recipients of the bulletin.

LOGA (LOCAL GOVERNMENT ANNOTATIONS SERVICE)⁶

This is a monthly current awareness bulletin covering journal literature and produced co-operatively by the public libraries of the London boroughs of Barnet, Brent, Camden, Hackney, Havering, Lewisham, Newham, Kensington and Chelsea and the City of Westminster. It began life as an internal service produced by the public library in Havering but, on the reorganisation of local government in London, the London Boroughs Association set up an advisory body of librarians to consider the production of a bulletin for the whole of London local government. LOGA is edited at Havering and first appeared in 1966. From December 1967 it has been commercially printed and enjoys a wide circulation both inside and outside London. However, contacts with information providers around the country suggest that it is not heavily used, perhaps because of the minimal information given with each entry and the lack of any kind of index.

WESLINK

Weslink is a large scale co-operative venture and, within it, a small group of 14 public libraries, a technical college, a development corporation, a local authority R. & I. unit and a regional water authority are working together to produce bulletins in the local government field. At two weekly intervals abstracts from an agreed list of about 90 journals are sent to Birmingham public libraries' science and technology department where they are edited, put into broad subject order and offset as master copies on plain paper. Copies are sent to the participating units who can then reprint under a local cover. The bulletin is wide-ranging in coverage and is intended to appeal to elected members in particular.

Not all participating libraries are able to reprint the bulletin, and presumably retain the references for enquiry answering purposes. Those who do reprint include the following:

Birmingham Public Libraries

Reprinted as *Birmingham Briefing* (formerly *Membir*) and sent to 75 officers and members in Birmingham District Council. Distribution is not being positively extended because of pressure on resources but it continues to grow by one or two recipients per month. The provision of photocopies of particular articles quoted in the bulletin is dealt with by Birmingham itself or by other members of the group where journals are not held in house. The bulletin generates between 20 and 30 requests for photocopies per fortnightly issue.

West Midlands CC Central Statistical Information and Research Unit

Here the bulletin is reprinted fortnightly as *Members' Information Service* and was sent initially to all 104 members. Following a questionnaire survey in April 1976, to which 54 members replied, 43 members said they wished to continue receiving the service. Response in July 1976 was about 100 requests for photocopies.

Gloucestershire County Libraries

The bulletin is reprinted as *Précis* and circulated to officers, initially one copy per department with extra copies on request. In view of the relatively limited distribution, response in terms of requests for photocopies is fairly modest but Gloucestershire appears pleased with the bulletin and believes it fulfils a genuine need within the authority.

The advantage of the Weslink approach to co-operation lies in the production of a finished bulletin for the participants. This can be of great value to services with limited staff who cannot afford the time to reformat material at local level. Gloucestershire, for example, argues that participation in the Weslink scheme involves the input of only a few hours time of two reference librarians in preparing abstracts and arranging for the printing and distribution of the bulletin at local level.

The disadvantages lie mainly at the editing stage which can itself lead to delays in the final dissemination of material particularly when, as in the Weslink scheme, strict deadlines are not always observed for sending material to the central point. However, the disadvantages seem to be outweighed by the production of a finished bulletin which can be used almost straightaway at the end of each two week period. The problems mainly relate to the need to delete inconsistencies in entries and to ensure that the final bulletin forms a balanced whole. The group includes a fairly large number of organisations with diverse interests

and this can lead to differing approaches to the selection of journal articles for inclusion in the bulletin.

YADLOGIS (YORKSHIRE AND DISTRICT LOCAL GOVERNMENT INDEXING SERVICE)

This scheme began in August 1975 with six public library authorities (Bradford, Cleveland, Humberside, Kirklees, Sheffield and Wakefield) and the South Yorkshire County Council Department of Administration's Information Unit,⁷ many of whom were already providing their own current awareness bulletins. In mid-1976 North Yorkshire joined the scheme, followed by Rotherham public libraries at the end of the year.

In 1977 each unit, with the exception of Rotherham, was responsible for providing annotated index entries from up to 20 journals of mixed frequency allocated from a total of about 160 titles. At the end of each fortnightly period each unit types its entries in an agreed format on sheets of plain A4 paper and arranges them according to an agreed list of subject headings. At present each participant makes photocopies of these sheets which are sent to the other units in the scheme either through joint services transport operating in the Yorkshire area or by first class post. An average of about 270 articles are indexed per fortnight and the participants are free to use the material in whatever way they wish.

Bradford

Bradford uses most of the material in the compilation of a large scale fortnightly bulletin, *Local Government Information*, which also includes details of new books and official publications of interest. Some 200 copies are distributed to the chief officers and staff of the authority, to those members who request the bulletin and to various outside bodies such as the water authority, the area health authority and the fire service.

Participation in the scheme has enabled Bradford to increase its coverage of journals in *Local Government Information* from 60 to over 150 with no extra indexing effort. About 180 photocopied articles are requested per issue, as opposed to 80 per issue in 1974-75 before the inception of YADLOGIS.

Cleveland

Prior to the introduction of the co-operative scheme Cleveland produced its own monthly journal abstracting bulletin, but was forced to discontinue it in spite of good response because of financial problems. Initially YADLOGIS material was used to compile a database of articles on cards for retrospective literature searching, but the level of use made of this service by officers did not justify the staff time spent on it. The library now uses the entries to compile three subject based bulletins in planning, education and social services.

The YADLOGIS material is scanned for relevant entries which are cut out, rearranged in alphabetical order and photocopied to produce fortnightly bulletins on planning, education and social services. These are distributed to members, chief officers, research and intelligence units and departmental libraries. Cleveland, which has only one qualified information officer, also finds that the co-operative system reduces the amount of time spent in indexing and improves journal coverage with the same degree of currency as before.

Humberside

The fortnightly Civic Index produced from YADLOGIS material—replacing a monthly bulletin which covered about 70 journals—is distributed to 230 members and officers in the county council, some district council officers and members, the area health authority and other outside organisations. The YADLOGIS entries are edited and rearranged under new subject headings and a list of new parliamentary publications is added. About 250 photocopied articles are requested per issue and again the main advantage is seen to be increased coverage of journal titles, some of which are not held in the county library.

Kirklees

The members' librarian, seconded to the authority from the public library, uses about 130 items from each batch of YADLOGIS entries to produce a fortnightly bulletin which also includes some material from Hansard. They are arranged under broad subject headings, retyped and sent to all members and a few senior officers who request an average of 60 items per issue.

Sheffield

Sheffield public library uses YADLOGIS material to compile two subject based bulletins on education and housing for departments which have no departmental information service of their own. They also include details of press cuttings and new books; 68 and 52 copies respectively are distributed. Copies are also sent to Birmingham public libraries science and technology department in exchange for their technical bulletins on waste disposal and air pollution. About 30 photocopies are requested per issue for each bulletin.

North Yorkshire

North Yorkshire has only participated in the scheme since August 1976 and the YADLOGIS material is used as the basis of a selective dissemination of information service to officers in the county council, usually those with some kind of research or information role. The major purpose of this service is to inform users of articles which they would otherwise be unlikely to see and to improve contacts with the authority.

South Yorkshire

The Department of Administration's information section uses about 50 to 60 per cent of the YADLOGIS material to compile its fortnightly *Current Articles*. The *Current Articles* entries and the remaining YADLOGIS material are also transferred to cards and filed under specially created subject headings for use in enquiry answering. The bulletin is distributed to 50 officers in all county council departments and response is about 60 requests per issue.

The Department of Administration maintains a relatively small library and has neither the resources nor time to produce a current awareness service of this breadth locally.

The advantage of the YADLOGIS system as described above is its flexibility. Each participant can use the material as it sees fit, in general or specialist bulletins or in databases. They may also use the material selectively. South Yorkshire, for example, extracts material of particular relevance to the county council and aims to cover those journal titles which are not already in widespread circulation in the authority. A potential source of delay is also removed in that there is no central editing process as in the Weslink scheme. The close physical proximity of the participants also has advantages, particularly in enabling them to use the joint services transport system rather than the postal system for the despatch of copy to other units.

South Yorkshire estimates that the bulletin reaches its users three weeks after the beginning of each abstracting cycle (two week abstracting period plus one week in South Yorkshire to prepare and print *Current Articles*). In theory, therefore, material from the most frequently published journals will not be more than three weeks out-of-date before it is notified to the user, an improvement on many commercially available abstracting services. The ability to cover material as quickly as possible after publication may, however, be more important to the abstractor than the information user, except where press cuttings are concerned. The response of recipients of bulletins who save up requests over a period of time does suggest that 'awareness' may be more important than 'current' to some users of journal literature.

The disadvantages of this kind of system also arise from its flexibility. The scheme does not produce a finished bulletin, so a greater burden of work falls on the individual participants in repackaging the output. A number of libraries in the YADLOGIS scheme were already producing services before the introduction of co-operative abstracting and the new system is a positive gain to them in that they can reduce their total abstracting load while gaining increased coverage of journal titles. However, for those, like Cleveland, with limited staff resources the work involved in producing bulletins may be quite heavy. This can be reduced by simply photocopying the original entries instead of retyping them,

but some librarians may feel that the finished product lacks aesthetic appeal, an important factor in ensuring a good initial response to a current awareness bulletin.

As a result of these and other problems a meeting of YADLOGIS participants in August 1976 agreed to a trial in which the journal entries would be submitted to a central point for editing in the same way as the Weslink scheme. Rotherham libraries undertook this as their contribution to YADLOGIS and were relieved of any obligation to provide abstracts for the system. Rotherham's information officer edited the material to ensure bibliographical consistency and arranged it under broad subject headings to allow the use of particular sections of references as self-contained bulletins if required. It was then retyped and distributed to participants as a finished bulletin for reprinting under local covers.

The experiment was reviewed at a meeting in December 1976 where four participants approved the new system and four opposed it. However, all agreed that the new output would be a useful addition to the existing system. The continuation of the experiment is in some doubt since the future of the information officer post at Rotherham is subject to review and YADLOGIS has reverted to its original terms of reference for the time being.

SOUTH WEST REGIONAL LIBRARY SCHEME

This was an experimental scheme introduced in September 1976, based on the SWRLS headquarters in Bristol and covering the county library services of Avon, Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Gloucestershire, Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Oxfordshire, Somerset and Wiltshire. It encompassed approximately 80 journals, with Wiltshire taking a fairly large proportion of the abstracting load (19 titles). However, entries for other material were also included, such as reports, books, pamphlets and the Wiltshire bulletin, *Local Government Publications*. The scheme has already produced a union catalogue of the journals covered so that individual participants can approach each other directly for copies of articles from journals not held locally.

Each participant typed entries on 5 x 3in. cards or white slips according to an agreed format and allocated a subject heading from a standard list. These were sent weekly to the regional library office in Bath where they were sorted into subject order, allocated a serial number and photocopied. Photocopies of the entries were then posted to each participant who could use them as they saw fit. Copies of Wiltshire's *Local Government Publications* were also distributed as they are produced.

Devon

Before the introduction of the scheme, Devon was already producing a journal abstracting service in which editing was carried out by the local government librarian at county hall and abstracting shared out

among other librarians in the system. However, all abstracting, apart from the necessary input to the SWRLS scheme, has now stopped. *Local Government Literature* continues to be produced, but will probably be phased out with the change-over to subject based bulletins made possible by the co-operative coverage of journals. At the moment building, architectural and construction material is sent to the architects' department information officer to be used as the basis of a manual SDI service. There are also plans to introduce two specialised services; bulletins on energy topics for the newly set up South West Energy Group and a bulletin for the county's transport planners. The increased coverage of the journal literature has coincided with the allocation of extra staff to the local government service and may well prove extremely useful in the development of specialised departmental services.

Wiltshire

Wiltshire county library was also providing a number of current awareness services before the introduction of the scheme and, like Devon, expects to use the new material to develop more subject based services including one on management and administration issues.

Hampshire

Hampshire county libraries were producing a regular monthly bulletin before the introduction of co-operation and this has continued. However, abstracting effort has been reduced at local level and distribution of the bulletin has increased to between 650 and 700 copies in both the county council and districts. Extra effort in editing is necessary, however, because various participants in the scheme have different approaches to abstracting.

Gloucestershire

As indicated earlier Gloucestershire is also part of the Weslink co-operative scheme and finds the resulting bulletin useful. However, the libraries development also feels bound to participate in the scheme introduced by its own region. The initial reaction to the SWRLS output seems to suggest that it is of limited value to authorities with few resources to devote to bulletin production. Gloucestershire is unable to make any positive use of the material apart from storing it for reference and enquiry answering purposes.

SOCIAL WORK INFORMATION BULLETIN (SWIB)

This differs from the other co-operative ventures in that it is concerned with a specific subject area, but the production of a fortnightly abstracting bulletin is organised along similar lines to those in Yorkshire, the West Midlands and the South West. It was launched in January 1976

and is produced by Coventry Social Services Department, Derbyshire county libraries, Leicester University library, Leicestershire libraries and information service and Cheshire county libraries. The contributors send abstracts on 8 x 5in. cards to a central point where they are edited and typed under broad subject headings and sent to Coventry Social Services Department for printing. The editor also circulates rejected abstracts at intervals to extend the database for selective dissemination of information purposes.

Project INISS, based at the Sheffield University Postgraduate School of Librarianship and Information Science, has agreed to monitor the first 20 issues of *SWIB* as part of its work on the information needs of social services departments and issued an interim report in January 1977⁸. This includes preliminary analyses covering:

journal titles ranked according to the number of articles from each included in the bulletin;

journal titles ranked according to the average number of articles from each included in the bulletin;

subject headings ranked by the number of abstracts entered under each heading;

a detailed analysis of the demand for photocopies received by Leicestershire libraries, Leicester University library and Coventry Social Services Department which includes an analysis of demand by number of requests per abstract; an analysis of abstracts resulting in 20 or more requests by subject and journal title; an analysis of zero demand items by subject and journal title; an analysis of demand by journal title; and an analysis of demand over time.

Apart from giving valuable information to the participating libraries on their ability to match selection to expressed information needs, this exercise also indicates the complexity of monitoring in this area. Demand can be expressed in a number of ways and levels will vary considerably depending on the terms of reference used.

So far the monitoring exercise has not looked at the perceived value of the articles ultimately received by users but a sample survey of users may be possible at a later date to assess the usefulness of the abstracts themselves. Data on the operational costs of *SWIB* are also being collected for analysis.

Formal statistical monitoring of any information service is always time consuming and many information handlers are unable to devote any time to it. In a local service where they are in close regular contact with information users this may be acceptable but a co-operative scheme

which may select material for users in other authorities needs more definite information if it is to maintain its relevance. Other co-operative ventures have shown interest in the *SWIB* monitoring exercise and there are also lessons to be learned by individual services producing bulletins.

The co-operative production of abstracting bulletins in the social services has also been tried in London by a number of social services departments and voluntary organisations who produced a current awareness bulletin called *Journal Summarising Service*. Administrative and other problems led to its fairly early demise but there is still evidence of some interest in this approach. Wandsworth London Borough social services department had produced a bulletin, *Summaries of Research in the Social Services*, for some time and is now making it available on subscription to other authorities. It is also encouraging outsiders to contribute to the bulletin in exchange for a free copy. It covers a small number of social services journals as well as other published and semi-published material and provides long informative abstracts rather than the brief index entries characteristic of library based co-operative schemes.

In Doncaster two current awareness services are also provided through joint action by the social services department, the legal and administrative services directorate and the district branch of the Residential Care Association. One, *Abstracts from Social Work Journals*, appears monthly and also includes details of additions to the social services library. The other, *Training*, also appears monthly and notifies recipients of relevant courses and conferences in the social services field.

ADVANTAGES OF CO-OPERATION

Co-operative coverage of published information in the local government field, which now seems firmly established in two areas of the country, may well attract further interest as a result of the economic restrictions facing information services. In general such an approach enables a more effective use of limited resources in the indexing and abstracting of journal literature by reducing unnecessary duplication of effort between authorities with related interests. This may be reflected in a number of ways.

1. By reducing the number of journals to be scanned and abstracted and by reducing the amount of effort put into editing and printing bulletins, co-operation usually results in direct time (and therefore cost) savings to authorities already producing bulletins. The degree of time saving will depend on the nature of the final output of the co-operative scheme and it is likely to be greater where a finished bulletin is produced at a central point. However, the amount of clerical effort involved in providing back up services, such as the provision of photocopies, is likely to increase since co-operatively produced bulletins are usually wider

in coverage than locally produced services and may generate a greater response. Since the provision of efficient back-up is essential to the success of any current awareness service this is a crucial factor in any co-operative scheme.

2. Co-operation can enable an already established service to broaden the subject base of its current awareness bulletins. The Planning Exchange research project already mentioned also found that the bulletins studied limited their subject coverage to certain local government topics while excluding others which were, perhaps, less central but still of great importance. Thus social services and education tend to be covered by most bulletins while employment and planning are treated less often.

The reasons for this selectivity are not difficult to find. All local government information services are aware of the immense amount of published information 'relevant' to their authorities and of the need to keep bulletins to a manageable size. Their services have often developed in response to demands from specific department and their coverage of local government subjects is likely to be uneven. As a result they inevitably concentrate on the areas in which they have the greatest expertise and which reflect the interests of their primary customer groups.

A co-operatively produced bulletin (or database), by capitalising on the resources of a number of units, can help to correct local imbalances of this kind, particularly by making the production of subject based bulletins a practical possibility.

3. Co-operation, by reducing the time spent on material with a common appeal, can also release resources to concentrate in greater depth on information sources with specifically local interest, particularly where press information is concerned. In the case of journal based bulletins it is possible for participants to account for outside interests to the extent that Bradford public library, for example, is perfectly capable of picking up material on ports for Humberside and Cleveland. However, they are unlikely to have more than a superficial knowledge of each other's needs and no co-operatively produced bulletin can entirely replace local literature searching.

4. Co-operation can also release resources to cover other kinds of material, whether published or not. Co-operative activity at present is mainly directed at the journal literature and the time gained at local level could be used constructively to improve coverage of other, more difficult, areas of the local government literature such as the authority's own publications and those of pressure groups. These information sources are often of great importance to local government information services but are rarely covered adequately by existing abstracting and indexing services.

5. For those authorities unable to produce any kind of current awareness bulletin with existing resources, co-operation can make the provision of a basic service at minimum cost a practical possibility. This is a major factor in the participation of many authorities in co-operative schemes which give them access to a bulletin or database for little more than the time taken to scan and abstract a few journals, plus the clerical time needed to print and distribute a bulletin and handle any resulting requests for further information. In the cases of Sheffield and Gloucestershire this effort at both clerical and professional level has been absorbed into existing work schedules while the production of a bulletin at local level would place an unacceptable strain on resources.

LIMITATIONS OF EXISTING SCHEMES OF CO-OPERATION

The consortium approach does not usually lend itself to the production of bulletins with a higher frequency than fortnightly although the SWRLS scheme is experimenting with a weekly service. It does not, therefore, seem suitable for the production of press bulletins which are often the most time-consuming aspects of an information service's work and where currency is important. The re-use of services as outlined earlier can be an alternative but few are available for sale or exchange and are unlikely to be of much use to authorities outside the immediate area in which they are produced.

The database approach, as in the YADLOGIS scheme, is of value to those authorities with the resources to reformat material into general or specialist bulletins but is of less use to others with no established services who can often do little more than store the material for use in answering enquiries. On the other hand, the bulletin approach as in the Weslink scheme is ideal for an authority with limited resources but may represent a loss of flexibility for more established services.

At present co-operative activity is largely confined to one kind of literature—the journal. This is understandable in the sense that the allocation of titles between participants is relatively simple, but it also represents a possible over-emphasis of one kind of document at the expense of other valuable sources of published information. It has also been argued that the kinds of journals covered by co-operative schemes may be of less value to local government than librarians think. This is particularly so in the case of so-called core journals, such as *Local Government Chronicle*, *Municipal Journal* and the *County Councils Gazette*, which are often already in wide circulation in local government. As a result it may well be a waste of time and effort to abstract these for inclusion in a bulletin although it is important to remember that bulletins may prompt users to read articles they might otherwise have missed in their copies of journals. However, there may be a greater danger of including irrelevant or redundant information in a co-operatively produced bulletin

because selection of material may be done by librarians not working directly with local government. It would seem a useful general principle for all local government information services to discover exactly what journals already circulate in their authorities and who has access to them, before making any decisions on which to scan and abstract for a bulletin.

OTHER POTENTIAL AREAS FOR CO-OPERATION

Apart from journal articles there are a number of other sources of published information which could usefully be included in abstracting services. Again, the following suggestions could apply equally well to bulletins produced in individual authorities but they do also lend themselves to a co-operative approach.

BOOKS AND PAMPHLETS

Although books as such may be of less value in local government information services than journals or other more ephemeral material, there is a considerable amount of non-journal publishing in the field. Some of it, such as pressure group literature and theses, can provide considerable difficulties for information services if it is not conventionally published and may lend itself to co-operative acquisition and storage. Details of non-journal publications could be published co-operatively as separate bulletins or included with journal material as already done to a limited extent in the South West scheme. The Yorkshire participants also include non-journal material in their bulletins but this is usually added at local level.

GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS

Most services find these of great value in satisfying the information needs of both officers and members and some, Sheffield's Administration and Legal Law Library, for example, issue specialised current awareness bulletins covering Acts, statutory instruments and other official publications. Most public library based local government information services have access to a wide range of government publications through the HMSO selective subscription scheme, so the provision of complex inter-loan facilities is unlikely to be necessary. However, the listing of these documents for current awareness purposes can be time-consuming and would lend itself to a co-operative approach—each participant listing material in a separate subject area for ultimate publication as a general bulletin or series of subject based services. The YADLOGIS scheme is considering the co-operative coverage of Hansard material and this could be of great value to services which find this activity too time-consuming to be practicable at local level.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTATION

The acquisition of published and semi-published documents produced by local authorities is a major problem for many information services and a co-operative approach to the storage and recording of such documents could ease these problems by relieving individual units from some of the effort involved in trying to locate and acquire material produced by neighbouring authorities. Each participant could be made responsible for collecting and recording details of the freely available material produced by its own authority and for making copies available on loan to other units. Lists of such material could be passed to a central point for editing and inclusion in a current awareness bulletin.

There are a number of problems connected with the control of local government's own documentation and these will be discussed in more detail in a later chapter. The GLC research library is one of the few information services to make an attempt at listing documentation produced by authorities in its own area and this met with only limited success.

Library based local government information services might also consider extending co-operative activity to produce services other than the conventional abstracting or acquisitions bulletin. These serve a partial need within local government but are not suitable for all kinds of user or for all kinds of information need. The most obvious possibilities include the following.

Bibliographies

A number of librarians are beginning to question the value of the traditional bibliography within local government, except perhaps in the case of officers embarking on new research projects who need a comprehensive picture of the subject area. If they are considered to be useful a co-operative scheme could well capitalise on the particular subject expertise of participants to produce bibliographies for reprinting under local covers.

Literature reviews

The more established services such as Leicestershire and the GLC have moved away from the conventional bibliography towards a narrative literature review which presents the documentation in a logical pattern and can stand on its own as a summary of the state of the art in a particular subject area. So far they have usually been directed at elected members, but there is little reason why similar reviews should not be produced in more technical areas for officers.

Literature reviews are time-consuming to produce and require a certain amount of subject expertise and literary skill as well as the basic skill of literature searching. A group of authorities could pool resources to produce reviews on subjects of common interest which

could then be reprinted under local covers with the addition of local material if necessary.

Indexing of committee and council minutes

This is an activity normally carried out by committee clerks but a number of authorities feel that existing indexes are inadequate both on grounds of frequency and detail. A few such as the GLC, the London Borough of Lewisham, the West Midlands County Council and Cleveland County Council have developed computer based indexing systems, using methods ranging from the relatively simple KWIC technique to more sophisticated packages like ICL BIRD. Others, including Hull and the Lothian Regional Council, have opted for manual indexing systems of varying degrees of complexity.

There is no evidence as yet of minutes indexing carried out on a co-operative basis although the Lewisham system was set up with technical advice from the GLC research library. However, there does seem to be considerable scope for such activity, particularly between counties and districts. The degree of success in establishing co-operative systems will depend on the relationships between counties and districts and the attitudes adopted towards the confidentiality of minutes and committee reports.

A co-operative approach to the indexing of committee minutes, papers and reports would be helped by a similar approach to the presentation of such material through the adoption of common standards within a particular geographical area.

All the co-operative activity described so far has, with a few exceptions, involved libraries. This is not entirely unexpected since the library system has a long tradition of co-operation in areas like the inter-lending of books and the acquisition and storage of documents. Inter-authority co-operation between other parts of local government has a shorter history and may be hampered by conflicts of interest, parochialism and problems of cost sharing.⁹

The result is that most co-operative activity to date has been concerned with satisfying the information user's need for documentary information produced outside the authority and many local government information services see their main role as extending access to these sources of 'alternative' information. Library based information services are ideally placed to perform this function by virtue of their access to a national network of document stores and, as a result, have developed a range of current awareness services designed to inform information users of trends in their own and other disciplines.

However, it has already been argued that documentary information is only one of a multitude of information sources used within local government and that, while library based services will inevitably be

largely concerned with documentary sources, they should not ignore the existence or importance of others. Some services have deliberately shied away from the 'library image' on the grounds that it gives a false impression of the role of the information specialist within local government; information is not synonymous with documents and a truly effective service must be capable of dealing with a number of sources and using a variety of methods of disseminating information. The abstracting bulletin is no more a *sine qua non* of the local government information service than the book or journal.

Some progress has already been made towards greater co-operation between local authorities in areas other than the provision of documentary information services, particularly in the context of the relationship between counties and districts. For example, the Department of the Environment Circular 73/74 on co-operation between authorities in planning matters, states that the 'effective discharge of planning functions under the Local Government Act 1972 depends on constructive working arrangements between authorities'. It outlines a framework for such a relationship and goes on to say that 'much of the effectiveness of co-operative working will depend on clear arrangements for the collection, use, sharing and exchange of information needed to carry out all parts of the planning process'.¹⁰

The types of information considered here are mainly of a statistical nature and, as such, outside the immediate scope of most existing local government information services. However, the distinction between different kinds of information is an artificial one and, one might argue, a distinction which has been fostered by statisticians, librarians and other professions involved in information collection and dissemination as a result of the mystique surrounding the techniques used in these activities. This does not mean that the activities of these different professions are interchangeable, but it does imply that they are closely integrated parts of a complete information pattern and that each profession can contribute valuable expertise to the others.

The development of services and systems to deal with information other than that produced in the world at large has mainly been confined to information services operating within research and intelligence units and other departments which include a range of information skills. However there appears to be no fundamental objection to the involvement of public libraries in activities such as the compilation of research registers or research newsletters, data inventories and other non-documentary information services where these are not already the responsibility of another department. Their failure to become so involved is, of course, partly due to lack of resources, but it may also be a result of an over restrictive attitude towards the kinds of information suitable for handling by librarians. Indeed, a quick look at the current awareness services produced by most public library based local government information

services inevitably leads one to the conclusion that, as far as librarians are concerned, the journal is the major and almost the only sources of information relevant to local government apart from the newspaper press. This specialisation is naturally reflected in the kinds of bulletins produced by the co-operative schemes described earlier.

In some cases the potential for inter-authority co-operation is severely restricted by the lack of trust between authorities in different tiers and in adjacent localities, particularly where joint action on internal documentation or other information sources are concerned. In one metropolitan county area, for example, both the county council and a large district council are conducting land use surveys of the same geographical area and refuse to co-operate. The same problems can occur with plans to develop joint indexing systems for minutes or joint research registers. It is perhaps significant that the only co-operatively produced research register is compiled by the GLC research library as part of its overall statutory responsibility to serve the London boroughs. In this capacity the GLC is expected to maintain an up-to-date picture of research in the boroughs and does so using the ACOMPLIS information storage and retrieval system.

In spite of the difficulties encountered in developing a co-operative approach to information provision, it does appear that the principle is of value in helping authorities to solve common problems and in improving their knowledge of activities in neighbouring areas. The success of schemes like that operating in Yorkshire does indicate that co-operation can result in significant time and cost savings to information services. The extension of the principle to other areas, particularly the documentation of local government itself, could be of great benefit.

REFERENCES AND NOTES

- 1 Research Requirements for Urban and Regional Planning in Scotland Following Local Government Reorganisation. A project funded by the Leverhulme Trust which includes a comparative analysis of some existing current awareness bulletins provided in English authorities. Contact the Planning Exchange, 186 Bath Street, Glasgow G2 4HG for further information.
- 2 *LONDON Government Act, 1963*. HMSO, 1963. (Chapter 33)
- 3 The GLC research library produces a daily press bulletin, the *Daily Intelligence Bulletin* with a *Weekly Parliamentary Supplement*; a monthly abstracting bulletin, *Urban Abstracts*; occasional *Research Bibliographies* and *London Topics*, the latter being literature reviews on issues of interest to the GLC. It also operates a computerised information storage and retrieval system, ACOMPLIS (A Computerised London Information System) and sells the computer-produced microfilm index to the database to outside organisations.

- 4 BRENT (London Borough). Town Clerk and Chief Executive's department. *Organisation and methods survey on document facsimile machines*. September 1974.
- 5 STOKES, P. and GRAYSON, L. An experiment in the exchange of secondary information sources in local government. *Library Association Record*, November 1975, 77(11), pp 261-262.
- 6 *LOCAL Government Annotations Service*. London Borough of Havering. Monthly.
- 7 DUCKETT, R.J. YADLOGIS: a success story in co-operation. *Aslib Proceedings*, April 1977, 29(4), pp 158-167.
- 8 Project INISS. *The Social Work Information Bulletin; report on an experimental information service; interim report*. January 1977. (Restricted circulation. Contact: Mr D. Streatfield, Project INISS, University of Sheffield Postgraduate School of Librarianship and Information Science, Western Bank, Sheffield.)
- 9 WALKER, J.R.A. *Inter-authority co-operation in information collection and use*. Paper presented to the Symposium on Documentation for Urban Management held 19-21 November 1975 in Paris. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 1975.
- 10 GOSS, P.G. and OAKLEY, M.R. The information challenge of reorganisation. *Planner*, April 1976, 62(3), pp 75-77.

Local Government Information and the Community

The underlying theme in the development of local government information services has been the desire to ensure that officers and elected members are adequately informed on the issues about which they make decisions. Hence the development of statistically based management information systems and, more recently, of documentary information services. To a greater or lesser degree the latter have attempted to improve access both to the documentary information produced within their own authorities and to that produced in the world at large. Methods vary from authority to authority but one can see the emergence of certain common approaches in the development of specialised enquiry answering services, the selective dissemination of information, the production of general and specialist current awareness bulletins, and the introduction of more sophisticated methods of indexing internal documents.

However, important though it is that local government be properly informed on the 'technical' issues involved in decision making and the operation of services, an information service which concentrates solely on these issues may be ignoring another aspect of information need just as vital to the maintenance of effective local management. Local government exists to provide services, in the broadest sense, to the public and its ultimate objective must be the maintenance and improvement of the public welfare. In order to achieve this objective it needs information on the attitudes and problems of the electorate in relation to the policies it proposes and this implies a two-way flow of information between the council and the community. If authorities do not have this kind of information they inevitably operate in a kind of vacuum; services and policies may be developed on the basis of the best available 'technical' information but there is no guarantee that they will be effective unless they can be related to public need. At the same time the electorate in a democratic society have a right to information on which to base their voting decisions.

A number of contributors to the local government press have argued

that the quest for greater management efficiency has been pursued at the expense of the wider objective of improvements in public welfare but there is some evidence of a change in attitude. The Urban Aid and Community Development Project schemes have argued that local government cannot be truly effective without taking account of public opinion in a more positive way, implying a greater role for the public in local affairs and a more liberal attitude by local councils to the provision of information. Rustin emphasises the crucial role of information in this context by saying that 'in relation to urban problems information is the best multiplier we have . . . the best means . . . of increasing at low cost the public's and government's awareness of problems on a continuing basis . . .'.¹

This view of information is not simply concerned with the provision of more and better information to the public and it is unlikely that such an activity alone would result in 'more informed' local government.² Local government itself is also a 'deprived information user' in the sense that it often has inadequate feedback on the impact of its actions on the public and the development of more open government is as much a response to this as to the demands of the outside world.

The elected member has, of course, always been a link between the local authority and the public, although sometimes to a very limited extent,³ and further steps have been taken in recent years to improve the two-way flow of information. The development of public participation, the opening of council and committee meetings to the public, the growth of local action groups and the proliferation of statutory and voluntary public information and advice services are all symptomatic of this trend. Local government information services have also contributed in part by making officers and members more aware of local attitudes as expressed through the local press and pressure group literature.

The cynic may argue that these attempts to open up the channels of communication between local government and the public are little more than cosmetic surgery and that the development of a true local democracy is doomed to failure because of the vested bureaucratic interests of local authorities and the apathy of large sections of the community. It may be true that, at present, the pressure for greater participation is largely a middle-class or middle-class inspired phenomenon and that attempts to satisfy their needs bypass the most severely disadvantaged who are less articulate.⁴ However, it would be hard to deny that there is a great need for information among such people and, equally, that existing methods of communicating with them have failed in many cases.

POTENTIAL ROLE OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARY IN COMMUNITY INFORMATION PROVISION

There are, of course, no easy answers to the problems of communica-

tion, but the development of public library based local government information services may provide an opportunity for some improvement. As indicated earlier some progress has already been made. On the one hand local government information services have been introduced to provide officers and members with more information about the environment in which they operate and in doing so have acquired useful knowledge about the nature of local government and the personalities working within it. On the other, community information services have developed to help the man in the street with a variety of practical problems, many of which involve the local authority either directly or indirectly.

There is a considerable degree of common interest between the local government and public information services and it should not be forgotten that a number of the latter are provided or partially financed by local government. The local government service, if it is working effectively, should have access to information produced within the authority and a good knowledge of council activities, structures and personalities. The community service has a good grasp of at least some of the problems facing local people and may well have access to unconventional sources of information of potential value to the authority. In theory, therefore, both have a lot to contribute to the other and an improved relationship between them could do much to aid the freer flow of information between local government and the public.

However, the current pattern is of random, uncoordinated development on both sides, with a few notable exceptions. Local government information services have tended to develop on a departmental basis and it is only in recent years that any attempt has been made to co-ordinate the various information points within an authority and to explore the potential of greater co-operation between authorities themselves. The pattern of community information is, if anything, even more complex with statutory and voluntary, general and specialist, and information and advice centres providing overlapping and often competing services.⁵ The dangers of overlap and lack of co-ordination to the user of information are well known and have been discussed at length by librarians⁶ and others⁷ with an interest in making the best use of information sources for the benefit of the user.

Local authorities and, within them, public libraries are increasingly recognising the need for a corporate approach to information, and the role of public libraries seems to lie in the co-ordination of existing points of information provision rather than their replacement. This approach is justified not simply because of the financial problems facing public libraries but also because the flow of information within local government is complex and cannot be controlled effectively by any one profession or department.

The same arguments can be applied to the provision of information

at community level.⁸ It is true, as some librarians have pointed out, that a proportion of the enquiries handled by community information services could equally well be satisfied by the public reference library⁹ but it is also true that librarians are ill-equipped by training to provide this sort of diagnostic service given, say, by a legal advice centre. This is not necessarily a criticism of public librarians but simply an acceptance of the fact that the provision of advice, whether or not it is based on documentary information is a specialised activity requiring particular skills.

Even if librarians were able to fulfil the information needs at present satisfied by other agencies, it would be inappropriate for the public library to try and replace the existing network of services because it would thereby restrict the individual's freedom of choice. Since public libraries are part of the local government establishment they would not be in a position to provide information or advice with the same freedom as voluntary bodies where local government responsibilities were involved. It is also unlikely that a public library based system of community information services would be able to attract the non-literate who are so often those with the greatest problems.

However, as in the case of local government information services, the public library is uniquely placed to provide support to other information providers in the community.¹⁰ Its role as supplier of a public service also puts it in a good position to act as a contact point between community information services and the authority.¹¹ The practical suggestions outlined below imply a positive role for the public library and a belief in its importance as part of the local information transfer system; they are directed at those libraries which have already developed information services for officers and members.

1 DIRECTORY OF LOCAL ORGANISATIONS

The provision of support services to other information and advice agencies will first require their identification and a number of public libraries have already compiled directories of local organisations. In some cases social services departments produce similar guides to organisations in their own field and a more general directory could be produced in co-operation with them and with other departments in the authority. Treasurers' departments, for example, may well have details of those organisations which the authority funds either wholly or partially. Some authorities also contain 'umbrella' organisations covering a variety of agencies and these can be approached for information.

It is likely that some public libraries will find useful directories already in existence which they could publicise more widely with the agreement of the organisations involved.¹² However the directory is produced it is important that there should be provision for regular updating and that care is taken to describe the responsibilities of

each organisation as accurately as possible to avoid the problem of wrong referral. Future possibilities include the recording and updating of directory information on Viewdata or other visual display systems, should they become widely used.

2 CURRENT AWARENESS SERVICES

Many public libraries are now providing such services for officers and members through the distribution of daily press bulletins, Hansard bulletins, local press bulletins and general or specialist abstracting services. Any or all of these might be appropriate to the staff of community information services and an extended distribution to such agencies might be considered. The assessment of needs could be done on an informal basis perhaps through seminars for agency staff on the services available from the public library. Librarians in some authorities have considered representation on 'umbrella' groups like Voluntary Action Lewisham and this could provide opportunities for publicising services to a variety of groups.

General purpose information agencies such as Citizens' Advice Bureaux and local authority public information centres may well be interested in press or Parliamentary bulletins, while specialist organisations will have more use for journal abstracting services and background papers on particular issues. Locally slanted services will probably have the greatest appeal, particularly if they include information produced by the authority itself. The National Association of Citizens' Advice Bureaux, for example, provides its local centres with general current awareness services of a high standard but cannot supply specifically local information.

Problems of distribution

The costs of printing extra copies of a bulletin may not be excessive but extra clerical effort and postage costs will be incurred with wider distribution. 'Free' distribution could be justified where agencies funded by the local authority are concerned and it is unlikely that many voluntary organisations could afford an economic rate for such a service. However, libraries may feel that the return in terms of improved contact with other information agencies outweighs the costs of providing a free service.

Problems of back-up

Similar problems may occur if public libraries offer a back-up service for the provision of photocopies in response to requests from bulletin users. Some public libraries charge outside users for photocopies at the rate applicable to members of the public but again it is unlikely that all voluntary agencies could pay an economic rate.

3 ENQUIRY ANSWERING

Most public libraries are already providing a service to local organisations on an *ad hoc* basis but it might well benefit from a greater degree of publicity. Like local authorities themselves, community information services may not consider the library as a source of information and a modest 'selling' operation will be necessary if the library considers this to be an important aspect of the service. The informal seminar or workshop would probably be an effective method of introducing community information services to the stock held in public libraries and to the ways in which trained librarians approach enquiries.

It is difficult to assess the extent of demand created by such a service but it is unlikely to result in much in the way of detailed literature searches. It will probably consist largely of enquiries to be answered from unusual reference works not held in individual agencies but there may also be requests for documents and for contacts in the local authority and specialist organisations.

Problems of document supply

This could raise difficulties particularly if the community agencies need access to local government documents. Many public libraries find these hard to obtain and rarely stock them in multiple copies. Similar problems could arise with government publications. Where local authority funded services are concerned, there may be a good case for centralised stock control to reduce overall costs to the authority.

Problems of contact with the authority

This is unlikely to prove important in the early stages of a service which would probably concentrate on current awareness bulletins rather than enquiry answering. However, it is possible that community agencies will come to view the public library as a contact point with local government officers. This could cause difficulties if the community agency is known to be hostile to the authority or if a case of maladministration is suspected.

4 ADVICE AND CONSULTANCY

The kind of service envisaged here is that which a public library might already be providing for departmental libraries within the authority on stock, classification methods, monitoring, etc. This could be of value in revealing areas of stock duplication between agencies and between agencies and the public library and could form the basis of a more rational acquisition policy at least for agencies funded by the local authority.

Problem

A major difficulty, as with departmental libraries, is the danger of the public library appearing as an 'empire builder'. A number of public libraries have tried to make contact with CABx simply as a means of finding out what they are doing and have found it difficult to establish any kind of relationship because of this fear.

EXISTING PUBLIC LIBRARY WORK IN THIS AREA

Since this book is not principally concerned with community information services this outline of public library involvement is by no means exhaustive but does give some idea of the possibilities.

CIVIC INFORMATION SERVICES

Some public libraries do already run civic information services such as the one at Hull which has been operating since the late 1940s. Sheffield city libraries also ran a service until local government reorganisation when it was transferred to the control of the chief publicity officer. The success of both these services can be attributed in part to their development of an independent 'brand image' separate from the public library and the Sheffield service was certainly involved in providing information and advice which could have been considered as against the authority's interests before its removal from public library control. This independent stance may well have been one of the reasons behind the change in base; the desire of local authorities to 'censor' the information made available to the public can be a major stumbling block in the development of any impartial information service based on a local authority department.

LINKS WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENT INFORMATION SERVICES

The extension of bulletin distribution to other information and advice giving agencies has also been tried in authorities with relatively well developed local government information services. Leicestershire libraries and information service makes its current awareness bulletins available to a number of local organisations including Family Advice Centres on the basis of reciprocal help with enquiries, etc. Birmingham public libraries have also extended the distribution of *Urban Abstracts* to Family Advice Centres in the area following requests from Centre staff after a seminar at the public library and are considering the supply of their bulletin, *Birmingham Briefing*, to the public via branch libraries. Lambeth libraries produce a specialised bulletin called *Link* for local community organisations.

SUFFOLK

Suffolk county library is developing a strategy for community information provision in response to pressure from the social services department among other factors. A hierarchical system for answering public enquiries has been developed based on branch libraries and culminating in the local government librarian; also, district handbooks have been compiled for use in branch libraries. These give basic details of county and district functions and offices, voluntary organisations in the area, government department offices, public utilities, etc., which will help branch librarians answer basic queries.

The social services department appears to be in favour of a more positive approach by the public library through the use of mobile libraries as information and advice 'clinics', current awareness services for voluntary bodies and the display of benefits information in branch libraries. A charities digest is also needed. The major problem faced by the library in responding to these needs is, naturally, a lack of resources. Branch libraries and mobile libraries are not adequately equipped to act as advice or information centres because of lack of suitable staff, high workloads, inappropriate opening hours and limited accommodation. Many branches are in one-room accommodation, for example, and lack the privacy necessary to an advice service.

CHESHIRE

Cheshire county libraries have been involved in the provision of community information services following a decision by a joint meeting of representatives from both the county and district councils to set up a series of public information centres. These 17 centres are financed jointly by the county and districts—the latter providing staff and accommodation and the former a central servicing unit and training facilities. Together with 50 branch libraries and 13 Citizens' Advice Bureaux they make up the Cheshire information service providing information and advice in each of the seven districts of the county.

The central servicing unit is based in one of the three libraries run by the public library for the county council, and one member of staff is employed full time to maintain and monitor the work of the network. Its main purpose is to acquire information of public interest from a variety of sources including local authorities, voluntary bodies and public utilities and to disseminate it to the network on a regular basis. It also produces a regular newsletter and the centres are visited periodically by the librarian in charge of the service. The information centre staff are also given training within the framework of the public library's training scheme for library assistants.

In the first year of operation the Cheshire information service as a whole handled about 250,000 enquiries increasing to 300,000 in the second year and in the public information centres well over 50 per cent

of the enquiries are related in some way to local government activities. This reinforces the view that community information provision and local government information services are closely related in terms of the kinds of information required and can be successfully linked.

COMMUNITY ANALYSIS

This technique for collecting and analysing information about the community within which a library operates has received considerable attention in the United States and a number of public librarians in this country are showing interest as they become more involved in community information provision. Hertfordshire county libraries, for example, held a seminar for branch librarians at the end of 1976 in which librarians were invited to prepare 'profiles' of their areas and relate them to the kinds of services provided. Representatives from the social services department and the county's research and intelligence unit also participated and the latter has now prepared a more formal profile of one area to see how the kinds of community information collected by the local authority could be of value to librarians.

It does appear that, in general, public librarians pay too little attention to the mass of information collected by their colleagues in other departments on the socio-economic and other characteristics of the population, despite the fact that this data could be of immense value in developing services.

OTHER RELEVANT RESEARCH IN THIS AREA

The Department of the Environment is funding a project on community information services which is based at University College, London. It includes a detailed study of the situation in Lambeth but has so far not considered the role of the public library to any great extent possibly because few of the community agencies have mentioned the library as a useful source of information. In view of the public library concern at the proliferation of independent information and advice-giving agencies, there are obvious lessons to be learned from this project and the British Library research and development department has shown considerable interest in it.

The National Association of Citizens' Advice Bureaux is also concerned at the lack of co-ordination in community information services and is considering possible ways in which the CABx could act as a focus at the local level. Suggestions include the sharing of training resources with other agencies, the development of common systems of information retrieval and the pooling of case study and statistical information. In some cases joint committees or working groups of CABx, other agencies and local authority representatives have been set up to look at the

possibilities of an authority-wide information 'strategy'. However, it appears that public libraries do not often figure in these developments in spite of their potential contribution to other information agencies, particularly those without the support of national organisations.

The British Library research and development department is fully aware of the increasing interest in community information services and is considering a number of research proposals following a meeting of librarians and other interested parties in November 1976. The BLRDD-financed Centre for Research and User Studies is also looking at the information needs of the community as a whole. It is to be hoped that any further research emanating from the British Library takes into account the activities of other organisations involved in community information provision to avoid the unnecessary duplication which has occurred to a certain extent in the local government field.

Other initiatives in this area are less formally based but equally important and include, for example, the formation of pressure groups like Community Communications which aims to co-ordinate and represent all forms of communications. The group is trying to reduce the isolation felt by many people working at grass roots level in community information provision and has been offered a grant from the Gulbenkian Foundation for this purpose.¹³

LIMITATIONS ON PUBLIC LIBRARY ACTIVITY

This chapter has argued that public libraries involved in the provision of information services to local government can contribute to a freer flow of information between local government and the public by extending support services to community information centres. Public libraries in the United States have already experimented in this field with mixed results¹⁴ and it is perhaps worth concluding with a brief look at some of the potential limitations on their activities.

As with local government itself, public libraries represent only one of a number of information sources open to community information services. Some types of service receive substantial support from national associations and the aim should be to complement, not duplicate, these services.¹⁵ Informal and unpublished sources may also figure strongly in community information services and the public library needs to be aware of these if it is to fit into the overall pattern of information flow.

Public libraries, therefore, can provide support in certain areas notably by providing a framework for greater co-operation in the form of some kind of directory and by giving improved access to documents from both national and local sources. In one authority at least a member-level working party on information provision has been set up and it is possible that this approach may be adopted elsewhere. If permanent officer working groups are established it would seem essential that lib-

arians are included as representatives of at least one important information agency in the community.

A major limiting factor on public library involvement with voluntary information agencies is its image. Many members of the public fail to recognise the library as a source of information and this is one reason behind the development of independent agencies. They in turn may view the library as irrelevant to their needs and approaches from it will meet with little response in some quarters. Perhaps more important is the status of the public library as part of local government and the suspicion this may arouse in community agencies which are hostile to the policies of the authority. Certain kinds of agency, particularly those providing general information services, may also see the public library as a rival and resist attempts at closer contact because of a fear of being 'taken over'.

The attitudes of public librarians themselves will also affect their approach to other information providing agencies. Some, for example, believe that the provision of 'special library' services to officers and members conflicts with the public nature of their service and the same argument could be applied to community information services, particularly if they are viewed as possible rivals.

The status of the public library as a part of local government is also likely to affect the authority's attitudes towards involvement with community information services. The hostility and apathy which public libraries might expect from some community agencies mirrors quite closely the response of some councils towards plans to upgrade departmental libraries and introduce members' information services. In the case of members' services experience has shown that the fears of senior officers can be allayed so long as the information service does not challenge the *status quo* to any great extent. They can be developed quite successfully as long as they confine themselves to activities which are believed to be 'politically' neutral and unlikely to affect the existing power structure. Thus, current awareness bulletins and quick reference enquiry services are becoming increasingly accepted as necessary to the elected member although there are authorities which deny them access even to these services. However, there is also evidence to show that more sophisticated services may attract the hostility of senior officers (and some members) because they can have a positive effect on the balance of power as a direct result of the librarian's actions in making information more freely available.

A similar pattern could emerge even more quickly in the case of support to community information services. The undercurrent of conflict between the bureaucrat and the politician can be masked to some extent under the guise of corporate management and there is a considerable amount of common ground between them simply because both are involved in the same organisation. However, community information

services are sometimes in open conflict with local government and the introduction of public library support to them could provoke opposition even at the relatively low level of service outlined earlier.

This kind of opposition could arise even where 'freely available' information is concerned, particularly where it comes from local sources. Librarians believe strongly in making information available to all those who need it (provided it is not formally classified) regardless of the use to which they put it. Most other people in local government, however, consider the 'political' implications of information and their attitudes to its availability are governed in part by the known or suspected motives of those who request it. There is a direct clash of philosophies here but a clash which rarely comes into the open at the existing level of information provision.

Librarians sometimes argue that their approach to information availability is neutral, in the sense that it simply ensures that all those who need information have equal access to it in confidence. Within local government this is probably the only basis on which an information service can be provided consistently, but it is unrealistic to assume that it is politically neutral. Equality of access to information is rarely if ever achieved by an information service so that some groups are always likely to be at an advantage by virtue of their superior ability to acquire, retain and exploit knowledge.

Thus a public library which gives a community information worker access to an index of committee minutes may be contributing to a shift in the local balance of power simply by making a document available. It makes no difference whether the document is 'freely available' or not—if the community worker had not seen it before it is effectively classified and access to it could add marginally to his influence in dealing with the authority. If the worker is hostile to a particular policy, the authority may see the librarian's action as a threat to its interests and the information service can suffer as a consequence.

This is, of course, an extreme example and it would be as unfair to accuse all community information services of hostility to local government as to charge local authorities with being unwilling to release information to potentially hostile groups.¹⁶ In many authorities there is a genuine desire to listen to other points of view and to co-operate with other organisations in developing policy and correcting faults in the administration of services. However, the degree to which authorities will tolerate the free exchange of information, even between their own officers and members, is often surprisingly limited and may be even more so in the case of outside agencies.

REFERENCES AND NOTES

- 1 RUSTIN, M. Whose total approach? *Municipal Journal*, 6 June 1975, 83(23), pp 742-745.
- 2 MALLABER, N. The apathy trap. *Municipal Journal*, 8 October 1976, 84(41), pp 1129.
- 3 DEARLOVE, J. *Politics of policy in local government; the making and maintenance of public policy in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea*. Cambridge University Press, 1973.
- 4 WARD, J. Equality of information. *Municipal Journal*, May 1974, 82(20), pp 595-598.
- 5 e.g. HOFFMAN, M.L.H. *Advice and information services in Lewisham*. LB Lewisham Research and Information Unit, October 1975. (Research and Information Report No.3)
- 6 JACKAMAN, P. Public libraries, information and the community. *Assistant Librarian*, February 1973, 66(2), pp 18-21.
- 7 NATIONAL CONSUMER COUNCIL. *The fourth right of citizenship: a review of local advice services*. National Consumer Council, 1977.
- 8 ASSER, M. Information and advisory services; the Leicestershire experience. *New Library World*, June 1974, 75(888), pp 114-117.
- 9 BELL, P. Downtown advice; High Street information service. *Assistant Librarian*, June 1976, 69(6), pp 106-107.
- 10 FORREST, R. Help me if you can. *Assistant Librarian*, October 1975, 69(9), pp 158-160.
- 11 LET us not hesitate to give advice. *Library Association Record*, August 1976, 78(8), pp 349-351.
Resume of a paper to the 1976 Scottish Library Association by the Director of Libraries and Museums in Cheshire.
- 12 e.g. SUNDERLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL. *Citizens' rights directory*. 1976.
- 13 *Contact*: Richard Dunn, Acting Co-ordinator, Community Communications, 30 Golden Square, London W.1.
- 14 WALLEY, E.D. and DAVINSON, D.E. *Developments in community information services in public libraries in the United States; a state of the art report and literature guide*. British Library Research and Development Department, 1976.
- 15 CLEGG, G. Information service for consumer advice centres. *Assistant Librarian*, June 1976, 69(6), pp 104-105.
- 16 WALLIS, H.F. The public and you—4. Open government the only way. *District Councils Review*, October 1974, pp 252-254.

The Future

Although most local government information services are at a fairly early stage of development, the need for well organised and professionally run services is being accepted by a growing number of authorities. It is unfortunate in many ways that this realisation has coincided with a particularly severe period of economic restraint, but information services may benefit in the long run if authorities are forced to consider how best to use existing resources in the development of improved information services.

It is likely, for example, that public libraries, as the 'resident experts' on document provision will be approached more frequently for help and advice in the setting-up of information services and that the trend towards greater co-operation between different types of information provider will continue. On the wider front, co-operative agreements between authorities are also likely to find increasing favour as a means of providing basic local services; these will, for financial reasons, be of particular importance to district councils.

However, there is also a danger that in conditions of economic stringency local authorities will consider information services as an expensive luxury to be dispensed with. There is certainly plenty of evidence to show that budgets are being reduced. In these circumstances it is essential that librarians and other information handlers are able to demonstrate the value of what they do; this may be difficult in an area which is not amenable to the conventional techniques of cost-benefit analysis.

The survival of information services in such circumstances is mainly a question of convincing people in influential positions within the authority and, wherever possible, librarians must back this up with hard evidence about the impact of the service. They must be able to show not only that they are efficient, but also that they are serving real needs in an effective way, and this requires improved methods of monitoring both users and services.

The British Library project, on which this book is based, was designed to identify areas where further research or action might be of benefit to local government information services, and at least two of these involve the development of better ways of monitoring the information environment. Proposals on user need and co-operative activity are already being considered and may well have been acted on by the time this book is published.

USER NEED

'User study' has become something of a term of abuse in library research. A common reaction to user studies in the local government field is to argue that authorities vary too much to make academic research into information needs of much relevance outside the authorities studied. Information needs are said to be diverse, constantly changing and not amenable to generalisation.

However, it does seem essential that services improve their knowledge of information needs as a basis for developing methods of satisfying them. It has already been argued that a failure to do this can lead information providers into the trap of concentrating on what they do best, or simply copying the services provided by other people, rather than basing their activities on the primary needs of users. Thus a management information expert may produce any amount of useful data from a highly sophisticated computer system, but it is of little value if the lay officer or member cannot translate it into usable information.

Greater knowledge of information needs and their relative importance is also necessary to avoid the misallocation of resources. For example, in a local authority suffering economic restrictions it is wasteful to provide a journal abstracting bulletin (however hallowed in library 'best practice') if other, more fundamental, information needs go unmet.

No academic research can replace the close and continuous contact between information provider and user that is essential to the development of an effective, responsive service which satisfies genuine needs. However, it is possible that an academic study could give information providers some useful general background on the patterns of information flow and needs within local government.

The most suitable model for any future research at the moment seems to be the Sheffield-based Project INISS which is using techniques new to library research to look at the detailed information transfer and use behaviour of a wide range of officers in social services departments. The project is described in more detail in Chapter 3 and its importance lies principally in the techniques used which provide data on a much wider front than those traditionally employed in library user studies.

The 'structured observation' technique, which involves the detailed recording of all information transfer 'events' over a period of time, pro-

duces a large amount of data on the working day of information users. Knowledge of information flows in the authority is essential to every information service, whether it deals with documentary information or not. If it does not have this background data, its ability to fit into an overall pattern of information provision is limited. The same knowledge is vitally important to local government as a whole, since an appreciation of patterns of information flow and the barriers set up to prevent information flow, can tell local government a great deal about inadequacies in its own structure and methods of working.

Project INISS, although still at a fairly early stage, is already showing common trends in a number of authorities in that officers involved in comparable types of work exhibit similar patterns of information use. The research team also suspect that the patterns could be repeated in other professions so that, for example, an administrative officer in a planning department might well use information in much the same way as his social services counterpart. If this proves to be so, it may be possible to build up a multi-disciplinary, 'across the board', map of information needs and flows within an authority—in contrast to the subject-based approach of most library research on user need—which could be of great value in giving information handlers a more coherent view of their environment. The Project INISS team has already presented further proposals to the British Library to extend its work to other groups in local government along these lines.

CO-OPERATIVE ACTIVITY

This is an increasingly important characteristic of local government information services, both in the context of developments within single authorities and in joint activity between a number of authorities. It is largely a practical response to the restrictions facing local government information services and, as such, might not seem a particularly fruitful area for research. However, there are a few areas where further work could be beneficial, in particular the statistical monitoring of co-operative abstracting services.

The Project INISS team, as described in Chapter 3, is also carrying out a monitoring exercise on the first 20 issues of the co-operatively produced *Social Work Information Bulletin*. This is providing useful information not only on the performance of this particular bulletin but also on monitoring techniques in general, an area which has been somewhat neglected by local government information services. It is important that techniques be devised that can be used easily at local level by information officers themselves, both for co-operatively produced and in-house bulletins. The Project INISS team is considering this problem in its plans for the future. One factor that may need to be considered in any further research on this issue is the need for suitable training facilities

to instruct information officers in the use of statistical techniques and the role monitoring can play in their work. Many librarians come from an arts background and may find it difficult to apply new ideas without some expert advice and support.

Another aspect of co-operative activity which might benefit from greater attention is its extension to other kinds of service including the production of literature reviews and bibliographies. The co-operative acquisition, storage and dissemination of local government documentation, and co-operation between local government information services and voluntary bodies are also areas worth investigating.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTATION

The most important initial need here is for more information on the publishing activities of local government although it might be argued that authorities vary too much in this respect to make any academic research of real value. However, there is certainly a need for more discussion of the problems involved in dealing with local documents and a detailed study of one, or a selection of, local authorities might serve to stimulate interest. It could also be used as a means of developing some kind of documentation system or policy to act as a partial model for other authorities.

As indicated in the chapter on documentation, there would be considerable problems in conducting such a survey because of the confusion over what does or does not constitute a document and because of the confidentiality aspect. However, the major problems are likely to lie in convincing local government that the documentation issue is worth investigating at all. Any study would require the firm support of the local government associations if it was to be successful.

The documentation issue is extremely complex and it is impossible at this stage to do more than outline some of the areas which need consideration. However, local government librarians might find it useful to keep these questions in mind when attempting a solution to the problem at local level. For example:

how are documents generated—what kinds of activity result in documents, and, possibly, what kinds of activity which might be expected to produce documents fail to do so?

who produces documents—is document production a feature of the work of particular kinds of people in local government, and is it characteristic of particular departments or sections?

who authorises publication and for what purpose and ‘markets’?

what kinds of documents are produced—what is their standing as publications in the conventional bibliographical sense and can they be categorised?

what happens to documents after ‘publication’—how are they distributed and to whom and how are they stored and retrieved?

what problems do people in the authority face in getting access to local documents?

Questions of this kind will need to be asked in order to build up a picture of what documents actually exist in local government and the purposes for which they are produced. However, it is also necessary to look at possible methods of improving access to documents (both physical access and intellectual access) should this be necessary. For instance:

could a local system of deposit help in improving access to internal documents—how best should internal documents be organised for easy retrieval and where any deposit function should be located in the authority?

what proportion of documents are available to the outside world and how best should distribution be organised—how can authorities ensure that their documents reach national information exchanges like the British Library Lending Division if this is thought desirable. Additionally, to what extent should the British Library Lending Division provide comparable foreign local government documentation (e.g. from USA)?

how can documents be improved as information carriers—is there a need for a centralised publications section employing suitable professionals to ensure a good standard of editing and production for a variety of markets, both internal and external? Is there a need for radical changes in the kinds of documents produced or can improved methods of access to existing documents be developed (indexes, for example)?

are some documents necessary at all—is there any scope for greater co-operation with other authorities to produce information of common interest?

User need, co-operation and documentation seem to be the main areas in which academic research effort might benefit local government information handlers, but it is important to remember that none of this research can produce a blueprint for the perfect service. The successful

provision of information to officers and members is not simply the use of efficient techniques but their application to a particular set of local circumstances, and something which proves successful in one authority may be totally ineffective in another.

The most important single factor, therefore, is the attitude of mind of the information provider and while this may seem a trite remark it is worth emphasising in the local government context. The experience of people already in the field shows that not only is the information environment extremely complex, it is also constantly changing as a result of structural and political factors. Information needs are difficult to assess and may be subject to sudden shifts as a result of external factors and, while this may be equally true of industry and commerce, it is usually more marked in the local government field. The information itself, even when restricted to documentary sources is also difficult to handle not only because of the breadth of interests of local government but also because of its 'soft' nature. Much of it is not amenable to the mechanised control applied to the scientific and technical literature, and the standards of bibliographical control in, for example, housing or social services literature are depressingly low.

There are many lessons to be learned here for the practising or potential local government librarian but three appear to be of particular importance. The first is the need for an outgoing attitude towards both information users and other information handlers inside and outside the authority. The ability to predict, or generalise about, information needs is limited and a successful information officer must be in regular, constant contact with his users if he is to keep up with changes in needs and help individuals to articulate them. At the same time he needs to maintain good relationships with other information handlers in the authority to ensure that he has a comprehensive picture of the information network. This will enable him to avoid duplicating the work of other people and, when necessary, transfer information problems to other parts of the network.

For similar reasons it is also important to maintain good links with other information handlers outside the authority and this does not simply mean other librarians. It is often far more fruitful to develop contacts with other information handlers who may have an entirely different view of a problem and can contribute new ideas on its solution. Librarians are relatively new to the business of local government information and can learn a lot from other professionals who have been involved for longer.

A LOCAL GOVERNMENT INFORMATION CLEARING HOUSE

The development of external contacts of this kind is, of course, a time consuming activity and, although most librarians recognise its value,

few are in a position to do much to develop such contacts. At the moment this kind of referral/information service within the profession is provided informally by a number of individuals and by groups such as SIG-LOGIS (Special Interest Group—Local Government Information Services) based at the University of Sheffield. However, the value of such services is limited, largely because no-one is committed full-time to the maintenance and development of links between information providers in local government.

The major need appears to be for a personal contact whom information handlers can approach with problems and who will maintain links between authorities on a regular basis. The same need has been expressed several times before by, for example, social welfare information workers, research and intelligence officers and community information workers, although, so far little has been done to satisfy it. However, recent British Library appointments of nationally-based information officers in various aspects of professional library practice may open the way to a similar approach in 'applied' fields like local government. In the absence of any central point responsible for monitoring developments and putting people in touch with each other, local government information services will continue to develop on the basis of learning from their own mistakes, or by adopting the practices of those few authorities which have committed their experiences to print. Since the well known information services are rarely typical of the majority, their solutions are not necessarily applicable outside their own boundaries; it would be to the benefit of local government information services as a whole if a wider spectrum of experience was available for newcomers to consult.

The role of a national information officer or clearing house could be:

to monitor developments in local government information services across the country whether they occur in libraries, research and intelligence units, or other local government departments. The initial emphasis would probably be on documentary information services but it is important that trends in other aspects of information provision be monitored as well (management information systems, for instance). The aim would be to build up a comprehensive picture of developments as they occur by scanning the literature and, which is more important, by maintaining a wide range of personal contacts in the field;

to maintain close contacts with practitioners by visiting services on a regular basis, particularly those which are recently established or have special problems;

to disseminate information on developments, perhaps by means of a regular newsletter;

to provide an enquiry/consultancy service to information providers in local government, particularly by referring them to other people in the field with relevant experience;

to co-ordinate attempts to improve professional standards in local government information services, perhaps by running practical seminars for a variety of information providers.

Another important lesson to be learned in the local government field is the need for flexibility. It has already been said that information needs are liable to sudden shifts, and the information officer must be able to respond to such changes even if it sometimes implies the waste of work already done. At the same time it is essential to remember that many kinds of information source are used in local government and that documents may come relatively low down the list for many people. The traditional library approach of a literature search/bibliography or, even worse, a pile of books may cut very little ice with a busy officer or member who might be just as satisfied with a verbal answer from someone down the corridor; a successful information officer must know the best way to respond to each customer. It may be necessary to cut corners or to by-pass formal library procedures in order to provide information at the time it is needed and a librarian who is unwilling or unable to make quick decisions is unlikely to do very well in local government.

The final lesson is the need for a proper degree of professional humility. This may be the most difficult lesson to accept in a situation where librarians are trying to impress on local government the need for a professional approach to documentary information provision. However, it is important to remember that books and journals are not the be-all-and-end-all of information, that librarians are by no means the only information providers in local government, and that librarianship cannot provide all the answers to local government's information problems. Librarians who find that officers and members fail to respond to the standard abstracting bulletin or other service introduced 'on spec' cannot comfort themselves by arguing that it is because their users are idle or fail to appreciate what a bulletin is trying to do; it is just as likely that their approach to the information problem is wrong or that they have imagined a problem where none existed.

In most cases all that matters to information users in local government is that they get the answers to their questions when required and in a usable form. The techniques used to gather and process the information, and the sources from which it comes, are likely to be of minimal interest to them. A librarian who over-emphasises these techniques and sources in an attempt to bolster the status of the service may well meet with little response from users. A willingness to co-operate with other information-handlers on a basis of equality, and a matter-of-fact approach to users,

may produce better results because effectiveness is more important, in the end, than professional dignity.

Appendix

LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND OTHER ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED IN THE PROVISION OF DOCUMENTARY INFORMATION SERVICES

Note: these are a selection of the authorities contacted during the British Library project and should not be taken as a comprehensive list of all authorities providing services.

Counties

Berkshire

Local Government Librarian
County Reference Library
Abbey Mill House
Abbey Square
Reading RG1 6AA

Cambridgeshire

Local Government Librarian
c/o County Library Headquarters
Prince's Street
Huntingdon

Cheshire

Principal Librarian (Information)
Research Library
County Hall
Chester CH1 1SF

Cleveland

Local Government Librarian
County Library
Victoria Square
Middlesbrough TS1 2AY

	Director of Research and Intelligence Research and Intelligence Unit P.O. Box 17 Rede House 67 Corporation Road Middlesbrough TS1 1LY
Cumbria	Technical Librarian Barrow Library Ramsden Square Barrow-in-Furness LA14 1LL
Derbyshire	Reference Librarian County Library Central Office County Offices Matlock DE4 3AG
Devon	Local Government Librarian Head of Central Information Services County Hall Exeter
East Sussex	Local Government Librarian Local Government Unit Southdown House St. Anne's Crescent Lewes
Gloucestershire	County Librarian Gloucestershire County Library Quayside Wing Shire Hall Gloucester GL1 2HY
Greater London	Head of Research Library Research Library Room 514 County Hall London SE1 7PB
Greater Manchester	Librarian Chief Executive's Department Research and Intelligence Unit Room 630 County Hall Piccadilly Gardens Manchester M60 3HP

Gwent	Planning Department Librarian County Hall Cwmbran HP4 2XF
Hampshire	County Librarian County Library Headquarters North Walls Winchester
	Assistant County Planning Officer (Research and Intelligence) The Castle Winchester
Hereford and Worcester	Librarian (Bibliographical Services) Libraries Department Love's Grove Castle Street Worcester WR1 3BY
Hertfordshire	Head of Research and Intelligence Unit County Treasurer's Department County Hall Hertford
Humberside	Principal Information Officer County Information Service Kingston House South Bond Street Kingston-upon-Hull HU1 3UE
Leicestershire	Principal Librarian (External Services) Information Centre Bishop Street Leicester LE1 6AA
Lothian Region	Members' Librarian Members' Services Unit George IV Bridge Edinburgh EH1 1UQ
	Physical Planning Department Librarian 1 Parliament Square Edinburgh EH1 1UQ

Mid-Glamorgan	Head of Intelligence, Research and Development Unit Clerk and Chief Executive's Department County Hall Cardiff CF1 3NE
Nottinghamshire	Members' Librarian Principal County Hall West Bridgford Nottingham NG2 7QP
South Yorkshire	Information and Liaison Officer Department of Administration County Hall Kendray Street Barnsley S70 2TN
Suffolk	Technical Librarian Local Government Library County Hall Ipswich IP4 2JS
Tayside Region	Planning Department Librarian Tayside House 28 Crichton Street Dundee DD1 3RB
Tyne and Wear	Senior Research Officer (Information Services) Central Research and Intelligence Unit Sandyford House Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE2 1ED
West Glamorgan	Director, Central Research and Intelligence Unit County Clerk's Department Guildhall Swansea

West Midlands

Information Analyst
Central Statistical Information and Research Unit
Chief Executive's Department
County Hall
1 Lancaster Circus
Queensway
Birmingham B4 7DJ

Wiltshire

Reference and Information Librarian
County Library Headquarters
and Assistant Public Relations Officer
County Hall
Bythesea Road
Trowbridge

Bibliography

This bibliography complements the narrative report and some of the items listed here recur in the references cited after each chapter. It consists mainly of material published during the last ten years which has proved useful in writing this book and is not a comprehensive survey. However, it does cover most of the important literature on British local government information services and includes a few references to developments abroad. The principal sources used were:

- 1 DEPARTMENTS OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT. Headquarters library. *Library bulletin*. Fortnightly.
- 2 GREATER LONDON COUNCIL. Research library. *Urban Abstracts*. Monthly.
- 3 LIBRARY ASSOCIATION. *Library and information science abstracts*. Bi-monthly.

Developments in the United States and Canada have not been covered to any great extent but, for those interested, sources used included:

Library literature; an index to library and information science. H.W. Wilson Co. Monthly.

Information science abstracts. Documentation Abstracts Inc. for the American Society for Information Science. Bi-monthly.

The contents of the bibliography are arranged as follows:

	<i>Items</i>
Historical background	1-6
Legislation and official reports	7-24
The wider information environment	25-46
Documentary information needs and services	
A. General material	47-67
B. Elected members	68
Academic views	69-82
Elected members' views	83-90
Officers' views	91-101
Miscellaneous	102-107
C. Officers	
General material	108-115
Information needs and services in planning	116-138
Information needs and services in social welfare	139-161
Information needs and services in other professions	162-171
D. The public	172-207
Secondary services and cooperation between authorities in information provision	
A. Bulletins and other forms of information dissemination	208-215
B. Co-operation	216-225
Information retrieval	226-238
Local government documentation	239-268
Developments outside Britain	
A. Canada	269-270
B. United States	271-275
C. Scandinavia	276-283

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Despite the fact that local government information services made little progress before the 1960s, a few early references do show that the library profession had considered the problems at a much earlier date.

1 [MUNICIPAL reference libraries]

Library Association Record, December 1917, 19(12), pp 497-505.

The 40th annual conference of the Library Association adopted a resolution to the effect that local government collections and services for both officers and members should be established in public libraries and run by full-time qualified librarians.

However, an article some 20 years later suggests that very little progress had been made and deplores the neglect of local government subjects by most public libraries.

- 2 FITTER, R.S.R.

Local government in the libraries

Library Association Record, September 1936, 38(9), pp 473-474

The American library profession shows a somewhat better record and a municipal reference library was established in Chicago in the early 1900s.

- 3 RANCK, S.H.

Municipal legislative reference libraries; should they be established and maintained as part of the public library of a city, or as an independent organisation?

Library Journal, August 1909, vol.34, pp 345-350

- 4 REX, F.

The municipal reference library as a public utility

Special Libraries, February 1917, 8(2), pp 23-37

Argues that municipal reference libraries '... are a central depository, workshop, laboratory and clearing house of facts and information serving as a haven to the perplexed alderman, department, bureau and division head ...' and describes the work of the Chicago Municipal Reference Library, set up in 1900.

- 5 RANKIN, R.B.

The special library profession and what it offers. 7; municipal reference libraries

Special Libraries, March 1935, 26(3), pp 63-69

Local government information services have an even longer history in Scandinavia where the Copenhagen City Hall library, serving both officers and elected members, was opened in 1897.

- 6 KOLLN, K.

Kommunal information siden 1897; Kobenhavns Radhusbibliotek [Municipal information since 1897; Copenhagen City Hall Library]

Bogens Verden, 1976, 58(3), pp 97-101.

LEGISLATION AND OFFICIAL REPORTS

This section lists some of the more important official documents giving the background to information provision in reorganised local government. There are, of course, numerous commentaries on the new system and the following are only a personal selection. Basic texts on all aspects of local government are listed in the current edition of the *Municipal Yearbook*.

- 7 HILL, D.M.

Democratic theory and local government

Allen and Unwin, 1974. 243 pp.

- 8 RICHARDS, P.G.

The reformed local government system. 2nd edition revised

Allen and Unwin, 1975. 192 pp.

- 9 STEWART, J.D.

The responsive local authority

Charles Knight, 1974. 168 pp.

The development of local government information services in Britain is in many ways based on the experiences of London local government which was reorganised in 1965 and, in particular, on the services developed in the Greater London Council.

- 10 ROYAL COMMISSION ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN GREATER LONDON, 1957-1960

Report

HMSO, 1960. 2 volumes

(Chairman: Sir E.S. Herbert)

- 11 LONDON Government Act, 1963

HMSO, 1963. Chapter 33

Section 71 of this Act empowered the GLC to set up an organisation to conduct research and collect information on any matter relating to Greater London and the result was the intelligence unit. This later included the research library which now provides information services to all departments of the GLC, the London boroughs, other local authorities and outside organisations.

A useful resume of subsequent developments in the GLC intelligence unit and intelligence units in other authorities is contained in a research library bibliography.

- 12 SCOTT, A.J.C. *compiler*

Research and intelligence in local government. 2nd edition

GLC Research Bibliography No.52, December 1975. 10 pp.

The background to local government reorganisation in England and Wales is contained in two major reports and the Act which provided the framework for the administrative changes.

- 13 MINISTRY OF HOUSING AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT. *Committee on the Management of Local Government*

Report

HMSO, 1967. 5 volumes.

(Chairman: J. Maud)

- 14 DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

The new local authorities' management and structure

HMSO, 1972. 179 pp.

(Chairman: M.A. Bains)

The corporate management structure advocated by this report has been adopted by most local authorities with considerable implications for the collection, use and organisation of information.

- 15 LOCAL Government Act, 1972

HMSO, 1972. Chapter 70.

In Scotland reorganisation has taken a slightly different course and the relevant documents are:

- 16 THE WORKING GROUP ON SCOTTISH LOCAL GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT STRUCTURES

The new Scottish local authorities; organisation and management structures;

report of a working group appointed by the Scottish local authority associations and supported by the Secretary of State for Scotland
HMSO, 1973. 117 pp.

(The Scottish equivalent of the Bains Report.)

- 17 LOCAL Government (Scotland) Act, 1973.
HMSO, 1973. Chapter 65.

This came into effect in May 1975.

Other relevant official reports with effect on particular areas of local government are quoted in later sections of the bibliography, but one is of more general interest because of its effect on the development of more open government and on attitudes towards the availability of information.

- 18 MINISTRY OF HOUSING AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT
People and planning
HMSO, 1970.
(Chairman: A.M. Skeffington)

Had a considerable impact outside the planning field because of its implications for greater public involvement in local government.

- 19 DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT
Publicity for the work of local authorities
HMSO, 16 April 1975. (Department of the Environment Circular 45/75)

Central government activity encouraged a greater degree of open government in this Circular.

Central government reports on the public library service are also relevant although possibly as much for their lack of attention to local government's information needs as for definite recommendations.

- 20 DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE
Aspects of public library management
HMSO, 1973. 28 pp.

- 21 DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE
The public library service; reorganisation and after
HMSO, 1973. 32 pp.

- 22 DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE
Staffing of public libraries
HMSO, 1976. 3 volumes.

Local government information services are included as a separate activity (volume 1, pp 117-118; volume 3, pp 224-226) but staffing standards are not given.

The Library Association itself has also produced some comments on local government services.

23 LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

The organisation of information services in the new local authorities; observations on the Bains Committee's recommendations

Library Association, April 1973. 5 pp.

Welcomes the designation of the 'collection and dissemination of information within authorities and to outside bodies' as an important management function and suggests that information services for officers and members should be administered as part of a general information and library service.

24 PUBLIC LIBRARIES RESEARCH GROUP

Public library aims and objectives

Library Association Record, December 1971, 73(12), pp 233-234

Suggests as one of major objectives of the public library 'To bring to the individual/group accurate information quickly and in depth, particularly on topics of current interest'. Sub-objectives include the development of special services to particular groups such as local government.

THE WIDER INFORMATION ENVIRONMENT

It is extremely difficult in any discussion of documentary information services in local government to divorce this aspect of information provision from other kinds of service dealing with statistical data, financial information and other types of communications media used in large organisations. This section, therefore, lists some of the more recent material on non-documentary information handling which appear to have a rather wider significance. Detailed technical articles on information systems are, of course, listed in the local government abstracting journals, and up-to-date information on the development of systems can be found in the Department of the Environment's annual four-volume *Register of Research* and in two volumes issued to complement the *Register*.

25 DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT. Headquarters library
Research and surveys 1975

The Library, 1976. 197 pp. (Information Series No.23)

26 DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT. Headquarters library
Research and surveys 1976

The Library, 1977. 348 pp. (Information Series No.24)

For the non-technical information handler interested in developments in this field, a useful source is the British Urban and Regional Information Systems Association bi-monthly journal, *Burisa Newsletter*, which includes short articles and comment on new systems written in layman's terms.

Local government information services have in some ways developed as an offshoot of industrial library practice and two recent books on information communication in the private sector are of some interest.

- 27 ARNOLD, D.V.
The management of the information department
Deutsch, 1976. 143 pp.

The concept of the 'information manager' is attracting some interest in local government and this book is a critique of existing methods of information management in industry and commerce.

- 28 BENTLEY, T.J.
Information, communication and the paperwork explosion
McGraw-Hill, 1976. 183 pp.

Questions the methods used for communicating information in modern companies and suggests radical alternatives which allow the manager to use all the sources of information with which he is surrounded.

Within the public sector the development of management information systems has perhaps attracted more interest than any other aspect of information handling both at local and national level.

- 29 McKINSEY AND COMPANY
General review of local authority management information systems
Department of the Environment, 1975. Various paging.

This report made a valuable point by stressing the need to assess the cost-effectiveness of systems before their introduction and by suggesting that more effective use could be made of existing data systems. It also argued for improved central control of developments in information systems.

Other articles and books discussing the role of statistical and management information include:

- 30 BENJAMIN, B.
The accountant and the statistician
Public Finance and Accountancy, March 1976, 3(3), pp 82-85

Discusses the role of the statistician as an information producer in the decision making process and relates his functions to those of the accountant who is both a user of management information and a provider of financial data for input into the management information system.

- 31 CENTRE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES
Information and urban planning; conference proceedings
CES Information Paper No.8, 1969. 2 volumes.

- 32 CHARNES, A., KOZMETSKY, G. and RUEFLI, T.
Information requirements for urban systems; a view into the possible future
Management Science, December 1972, 19(4), pp 7-20

Develops a dual hierarchy of information needs and management activities in an urban area and argues that information technology is likely to have a direct impact on the activities of urban administrators as urban systems become more complex and inter-related. 24 references.

- 33 CONFERENCE 1976; information systems for policy planning
Burisa Newsletter, November 1976, (25), pp 3-12

A summary of the Burisa (British Urban and Regional Information Systems Association) conference held in September 1976. It was particularly concerned with the relationships between existing information and the needs of policy planning and also examines the current state of information systems.

- 34 EARWICKER, J.
Corporate planning developments: information issues raised
Burisa Newsletter, March 1977, (27), pp 2-3

A brief look at three major issues—the inadequate nature of much of the present information used to support corporate planning; storage and retrieval systems; and the importance of information presentation for different kinds of user.

- 35 GILLESPIE, J.G.
Policy information
Burisa Newsletter, December 1974, (14), pp 8-12

Argues that the policy maker in local government, whether elected member or senior officer, is at a disadvantage compared with the case worker in terms of access to relevant information.

- 36 HOLTHAM, C.
Information systems in local government
Local Government Studies, October 1973, 3(6), pp 45-57

Discusses what an information system in this context comprises and isolates three components—corporate use of data, provision of information to all levels of management, and improvement in access to, and analysis of, information. Comments on certain broad types of information need in local government and on the provision of information to the community. 29 references.

- 37 MANSFIELD, H.
Research and information systems in local government
District Councils Review, February 1976, pp 34-36

A general examination of the role of information in decision making, including comment on the growth of central research units and on the report on management information systems by McKinsey and Company.

- 38 METROPOLITAN county review
Burisa Newsletter, May 1976, (22), pp 1-10

Collection of brief articles on the state of information work in the metropolitan county councils—Merseyside, South Yorkshire, West Midlands, Tyne and Wear and West Yorkshire.

- 39 OADES, R.S.
Information work in Greater Manchester
Burisa Newsletter, July 1976, (23), pp 2-5

Describes the work of the various divisions within the Greater Manchester Council

which have responsibility for information provision and looks at some recent information projects.

- 40 POTTIS, K.
Managed information
Municipal Journal/Municipal Engineering Supplement, 29 March 1974, pp 29-30

Stresses the importance of information in local government for operational and management purposes and argues that the efficiency of decision making is directly proportional to the quality of information on which it is based.
- 41 PRENTICE, G.R.
The statistical information service
Public Finance and Accountancy, June 1976, 3(6), pp 193-195

Discusses the background to proposals for a Statistical Information Service for local government to be provided by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy.
- 42 STANDING COMMITTEE OF STATISTICS USERS
Statistics users' conference; proceedings of the conference on statistics in local government, London, 12 November 1975
The Committee, 1976. 158 pp.

Among the papers presented to the conference was a discussion of the role of a central statistical service for local government.
- 43 WHITTINGTON, N.
Information needs
Burisa Newsletter, March 1977, (27), pp 3-6

Describes in brief terms the corporate planning process and looks at information needs in relation to the preparation of position statements, needs analysis, the setting of objectives, issue analysis, budgeting, action planning, corporate planning, implementation and monitoring.
- 44 WILLIS, J.
Design issues for urban and regional information systems
CES Working Paper No.71, January 1972. 134 pp.

Based on the hypothesis that the design of an information system must reflect the form of the planning process it serves. Thus a model of a planning process is developed based on a continuous process of monitoring, policy design, testing and implementation. Six British systems are reviewed.

There have, of course, been many criticisms of management information systems and this is only to be expected in such a rapidly developing area. The following reference is particularly interesting because it mirrors criticisms of documentary services quite closely.
- 45 WOODCRAFT, P.G.
Information systems; an R and I view
In Urban and regional information systems; proceedings of Seminar C, PTRC Summer Annual Meeting, University of Warwick, England, July 1975. Planning

and Transport Research and Computation (International) Company Ltd., 1976, pp 34-39

Speculates on some of the reasons why management information systems have not been the answer to all local government's information problems, as expected. Suggests that a principal factor is the over-emphasis of system and data considerations and an almost complete failure to consider the needs of the people who actually use information.

The need to consider information use and services within the context of the decision making process as determined by particular political and management structure is also emphasised in a recent research report by LAMSAC.

46 LOCAL AUTHORITIES MANAGEMENT SERVICES AND COMPUTER COMMITTEE

Information: what local governors need to know; interim report of the General Management Panel of LAMSAC
LAMSAC, December 1976. 24 pp.

A study designed to 'ascertain the basic information requirements of elected members and chief officers to enable them to identify needs, set objectives, establish plans and review achievements'. The functions of information in local government are discussed and information needs relating to both internally generated and external sources of information are described using housing as an example. References. (See also *Library Association Record*, May 1977, 79(5), p 240 for a comment on the report and a subsequent LAMSAC seminar on information needs by D. Kennington.)

DOCUMENTARY INFORMATION NEEDS AND SERVICES

A. GENERAL MATERIAL

This section consists of general articles on information needs in local government and on the development of services to meet them.

47 COOKE, M.

Information and library services in local government
Local Government Chronicle, 6 April 1973, 117(5534), pp 369-370

Defines the objectives of a specialised local government information service as improving the efficiency of members and officers by making them better informed, and discusses ways of doing this.

48 CORPORATE management means getting help from others

Library Association Record, May 1976, 78(5), pp 201-203

Report on a Library Association conference on local government information services held on 18 March 1976.

49 GRAYSON, L.

Information for local government
New Library World, September 1976, 77(915), pp 167-168

Describes the fragmented nature of many local government information services which have developed on the basis of individual departmental initiatives rather than a corporate strategy of information provision. 6 references.

50 GROSE, D.

Some deprived information users

Aslib Proceedings, January 1974, 26(1), pp 9-23

Isolates a number of groups in the community who are deprived of the information they require to solve their problems. They include teachers, health service workers, solicitors, local authority officers and members, trading standards officers, trades unions and members of the public. 23 references.

51 INFORMATION services at Hammersmith

Local Government Chronicle, 29 May 1972, 116(5439), pp 921-922

Brief item on the officer/member services developed in this London borough.

52 KENNINGTON, D.

Information and local government

Aslib Proceedings, February 1976, 28(2), pp 46-65

Describes factors leading demands for information in local government and draws some conclusions on the kinds of information staff and services required, and on the need for greater co-operation both within and between authorities on information provision. 6 references.

53 KENNINGTON, D.

Local government information services

In Proceedings of the 20th Annual Conference and Study Course, Norwich, 7-10 April 1972, edited by S.J. Lowe. Library Association Reference, Special and Information Section, 1973, pp 41-53

Argues a case for the establishment of proper channels for information dissemination both within local government and between local government and the public. Describes the work of the GLC Intelligence Unit Research Library and comments briefly on staffing requirements. 3 references.

54 KENNINGTON, D.

Local government information services

Journal of Librarianship, January 1974, 6(1), pp 1-9

Outlines factors leading to an increase in the information requirements of local government officers. Current research into these needs and examples of existing services are described, particularly those of the GLC research library. Looks at future co-operative developments in information provision in London local government and comments on the role of the library profession as a whole in local government information provision. 18 references.

55 KENNINGTON, D.

Some aspects of local government's information needs; paper presented at the Scottish Library Association Annual Conference, 27-30 May 1974.

SLA, 1974. 7 pp.

Looks at the need for information services in London local government and discusses ways in which there can be effective co-operation in the metropolitan area and other new units of local government to improve the quality of information provided, extend the catchment area for obtaining information, and economise in the use of scarce resources. 10 references.

56 RUSTED, J.

Good communication is vital

District Councils Review, April 1976, pp 99-100

Discusses the importance of effective public relations within local government and uses the term to cover communications within authorities as well as between them and the outside world.

57 WALKER, J.R.A.

Information services in local government

In Proceedings of the Public Libraries Conference, Eastbourne, 1975.

Library Association, 1975, pp 48-54.

Argues that public libraries could become the co-ordinating agency in the provision of local government information and that one of their greatest strengths in this area is their tradition of co-operation.

58 WALLIS, H.F.

Information and communication

Local Government Review, 21 December 1974, 138(51), pp 932-933

Brief report on a conference organised by Local Government Review which included a paper on the information needs of members by Professor J.D.Stewart of the Institute of Local Government Studies. Other papers covered some of the existing local government information services and the potential role of the public library in this field.

59 WALLIS, H.F.

The public and you—6. False economy to cut information service

District Councils Review, March 1975, pp 73-75

Makes a case for the strengthening of local government information services during economic recession to improve overall efficiency. Also emphasises the importance of access to information produced outside local government itself and the need for systematic information handling methods.

60 WHITE, B.

Information for planning in Scotland

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 1975. 6 pp

Paper presented at the Symposium on Documentation for Urban Management, 19-21 November 1975 in Paris. Discusses the particular information problems facing local government in Scotland in the aftermath of reorganisation. At present there is very little organised information provision or control of local government's own output of documentation. A possible network of information centres based on regional co-ordinating units is outlined.

Public libraries have generally arrived rather late on the scene as far as local gov-

ernment information is concerned but there is a growing amount of interest, as evidenced in recent articles and research.

61 BARNES, J. and HENDRY, J.D.

Local government information services in the Renfrew District

Scottish Library Association News, July/August 1975, (128), pp 316-317

Describes the early days of a public library based information service for members and officers of the district council.

62 KRETCHMER, W.

Planning for the community; the contribution of the public library service

In Proceedings, papers and summaries of discussions at the Public Libraries Conference held at Douglas, Isle of Man, 17 September to 20 September 1973. Library Association, 1973, pp 38-44

Discusses the implications of the corporate approach to community planning in the light of experience in the London Borough of Lambeth. Argues that the public library can both benefit from, and contribute to, the community planning process and can make a special contribution by helping to serve the information needs of elected members and officers.

63 PHELPS, M.

Information services to local government with special emphasis on the role of the public library; a study submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Library Studies at the University of Sheffield Postgraduate School of Librarianship and Information Science

The School, 1976, 89 pp.

A resumé of some of the arguments for and against public library involvement in local government information services together with a comparison of services provided in Cheshire, Birmingham, Derbyshire, Sheffield and Bradford. Bibliography.

64 STEWART, J.D.

Management developments in local government and the library service

In Proceedings, papers and summaries of discussions at the Public Libraries Conference held at Eastbourne, 28 September to 1 October 1970. Library Association, 1970, pp 12-14

Contrasts two styles of management; the passive and the learning. The passive is dominant at this time with authorities seeing themselves too often as simply engaged in the administration of services. However, new approaches to management will require local government, including libraries, to justify expenditure in terms of the extent to which it meets needs.

65 TENNANT, R.F.

The bewildered society; alternative views on the information explosion

In Proceedings, papers and summaries of discussions at the Public Libraries Conference held at Douglas, Isle of Man, 17 to 20 September 1973. Library Association, 1973.

Argues that the public library is failing to serve the whole community and that the local government member and officer are among deprived groups. 27 references.

The Institute of Information Scientists has played a relatively small part in local government information services to date. However, a recent letter to the Institute's journal by a local government information officer may indicate a change in attitudes.

- 66 SIMMONS, S.L.
Local government and information science
Information Scientist, March 1977, 11(1), pp 25-28

Discusses some of the problems involved in providing information services in local government and the role that the Institute of Information Scientists might play in this aspect of information work.

- 67 GOMERSALL, A.
Information provision in local government
Unpublished paper given at the Institute of Information Scientists Eighth Conference, The Challenge of Change, at York University, 23-25 March 1977.

A critical look at some aspects of information provision in local government, particularly information dissemination techniques which, it is argued, have been adopted sometimes inappropriately from industrial library practice. Also comments on information retrieval systems and existing research in the field. 7 references.

(Available through the GLC Research Library, County Hall, London SE1 7PB)

B. ELECTED MEMBERS

See also references 46, 55, 58, 213.

This section reviews the information needs of elected members, and the services provided to meet them, as reflected in the views of the academic community and officers and members themselves. Another useful source which also includes material on the related problems of providing information services to politicians at national level has been produced by the GLC Research Library.

- 68 SCOTT, G. compiler
Information for members. 2nd edition
GLC Research Bibliography No.64, June 1976. 9 pp.

Available from the GLC Bookshop, County Hall, London SE1 7PB.

Academic Views

- 69 CHAMBERLAYNE, P.
The coming of a new type of member
Municipal Review, April 1975, 46(544), pp 6-7

Report on a study by the Greater London Group of elected members serving the 1968-71 and 1971-74 terms of office in the London boroughs of Islington, Newham, Richmond and Westminster. Looks in particular at their age, educational and professional background, and ability to communicate both with local government officers and constituents.

70 DEARLOVE, J.

Politics of policy in local government; the making and maintenance of public policy in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea
Cambridge University Press, 1973. 218 pp.

Chapter 9, 'The councillor and his information', examines in detail the information sources used by councillors in decision making, their search behaviour, and attitudes towards different sources of information. Based on the response of 41 Conservative councillors and aldermen to a questionnaire but, nevertheless, provides an invaluable insight into the information seeking habits of local politicians as a whole.

71 DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

The Oldham study
HMSO, 1973. 47 pp.

One of the 'Making towns better' studies which reports on ways of improving conventional planning and management procedures to solve environmental problems. Chapter 9 briefly discusses ways of strengthening the councillor's role in the planning process—by establishing a directory of council departments and by setting up a secretariat to receive and process members' enquiries and supply them with a periodic review of council activities, particularly as they affect individual wards.

72 DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

The Sunderland study
HMSO, 1973. 60 pp.

Another in the 'Making towns better' series which argues that the improvement of the environment requires more knowledgeable and skilled councillors. Suggests the setting up of a members' secretariat to provide 'earlier, better and more detailed information about ward activities'.

73 EARWICKER, J.

Member involvement in corporate planning and management; some notes on current experience
Corporate Planning, June 1975, 2(2), pp 17-20

Outlines organisational changes since the Bains Report to increase the involvement of elected members in the policy making process. These include the development of policy and resources committees and joint officer/member working groups. Related issues which need urgent examination include the quality of information provided to those new structures so that they can work efficiently. The author is on the staff of the Institute of Local Government Studies (Inlogov) at Birmingham University.

74 EDDISON, T.

New deal for councillors
Local Government Chronicle, 2 March 1973, 117(5523), pp 252-253

Discusses the role of local councillors in the light of the Bains Report and suggests ways of improving their position including new ways of acquiring information and improvements in routine support services for members. At the time of writing this article the author was the Director of the School of Advanced Urban Studies at the University of Bristol.

75 EDDISON, T.

Officers and members

Municipal Journal, 29 November 1974, 82(48), pp 1517-1518, 1520

Examines the frustration felt by some elected members who feel powerless in the face of large bureaucratic authorities, and looks at ways of improving information flow to members and developing a more productive relationship with them.

76 JENKINS, R.

The provision of information for members of the Greater London Council
Polytechnic of the South Bank, 1976. 107 pp.

A Diploma in Management Studies dissertation prepared by a former personal assistant to a GLC member. Examines the existing provision of all kinds of information to members of the GLC and identifies some of the problems they face in relation to the amount of information thrust at them, and in acquiring constituency information. Bibliography.

77 LIVERPOOL UNIVERSITY. *Department of Political Theory and Institutions*
The politics of urban education; research report on a Social Science Research Council project into the formation of education policy in an urban setting, by M.H. Parkinson
The University, 1973. 57 pp.

A study based on three north-west county boroughs which found that half the councillors questioned in a survey felt at a disadvantage in relation to officers because the latter were seen to have a monopoly of expertise, information and time in policy making.

78 RHODES, R.

The new politics of local government—3.

Local Government Chronicle, 13 August 1976, 121(5707), pp 752-753

Makes suggestions for tackling some of the problems which have arisen from changes in local politics and includes comments on ways of giving greater support to members. Provision of effective information services is among these and it is argued that changes may be necessary in order to provide members with information which complements and does not duplicate existing material. Another view from Inlogov.

79 ROGERS, S. and STEWART, J.D.

The need for variety in documentation and information systems; the case of the elected representative

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 1975. 6 pp.

Paper presented at the Symposium on Documentation for Urban Management, 19-21 November 1975 in Paris. Briefly outlines the complexity of information in local government and discusses the particular problems of the elected member with reference to his need for access to alternative sources of information to complement those produced by the authority itself. The authors are based at Inlogov.

80 STEWART, J.D.

Support for the councillor

Local Government Chronicle, 23 February 1973, 117(5522), pp 220-223

Suggests that the councillor plays many roles—as policy maker, controller of the administration, public representative, etc.—and that the quality of information he receives in each may vary. Outlines ways in which information services could be improved including adequate secretarial services, research and advisory services, help with surgeries and general information support geared specifically to members' needs.

81 TRANMER, C.

Information and the local government councillor; a Master's thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Master of Library Studies of the Loughborough University of Technology
Loughborough University, May 1976. 82 pp.

Examines the various roles and functions of the elected member and the information needs arising from them before describing some of the kinds of information services provided for them. Concludes with a case study of the members of Oxford City Council Housing Committee who were interviewed in an attempt to discover their information use and need patterns and provided with an experimental current awareness bulletin. Bibliography.

82 YOUNG, R.

The role of the library in information services—1. The politics of information
In Peebles '76; proceedings of the 62nd Annual Conference of the Scottish Library Association 24-27 May 1976. The role of the library in a changing society, edited by A.G.D. White, SLA, 1976, pp 38-45.

Suggests that the political process is affected by a naïve belief in the notion that the necessary facts will somehow reach the decision makers. Information is not neutral and until librarians and other information providers accept this fact they will be able to do little for politicians in local government.

Elected members' views

83 FREEMAN, R.

Back at the GLC after five years

Municipal Review, March 1976, 46(555), pp 331-332

This GLC member examines the changes in County Hall over the previous five years and asks whether it is better equipped to govern London as a result. Facilities available to members are described including the members' information service.

84 FREEMAN, R.

Becoming a councillor; a guide for the new council member

Charles Knight, 1975. 136 pp.

Chapter 8, 'Organisations for councillors', contains a section on obtaining information which examines political, public and specialist sources of information for the elected member.

85 FREEMAN, R.

Members who changed with the changes

Municipal Review, April 1975, 46(544), pp 22-23

Assesses changes in the role of the elected member in the GLC over the previous ten years.

86 HEATH, T.

[Information services for councillors]

Municipal Review, January 1974, 45(529), pp 390-391

A member of the newly reorganised Surrey County Council argues that the effectiveness of local government members depends in part on their access to, and understanding of, a wide range of information.

87 LISTER, P.

Corporate planning in local government; the member's view of information needs

In Urban and regional information systems; proceedings of Seminar C, PTRC Summer Annual Meeting, University of Warwick, England, July 1975. Planning and Transport Research and Computation (International) Company Ltd., pp 1-6

Stresses the variety of professions, educational backgrounds, working methods, etc., of local councillors and comments on the wide range of roles they adopt. Argues that information must be tailored to suit the different roles of the member as policy maker, persuader, monitor of progress and committee member.

88 PHILPOT, T.

A new councillor's cry from the heart about his job

Municipal Review, July 1974, 45(535), p 122

Brief comment on the problems faced by a new councillor in understanding the structure and operation of local government. Calls for more and better organised information services to help the councillor operate efficiently.

89 PHILPOT, T.

Personal view

Social Work Today, 10 July 1975, 6(8), pp 241-242

Argues that it is necessary to have access to information to be effective in local policy making and looks at the distinction between internal committee information and general background and constituency information.

90 VERNON, B.

Did reform help the member?

Municipal Review, April 1975, 46(544), pp 24-25

A member of the London Borough of Sutton examines the changes brought about by local government reorganisation in Greater London. While welcoming the decline in parochialism, she finds the increased size of the administrative unit, and the expansion of local government responsibilities, a barrier to close relationships with the electorate. This reinforces the need for effective members' secretarial and information services.

Officers' views

91 BLOOM, L.A.

Making members effective in Sunderland

Municipal Review, September 1974, 45(537), pp 175-176

The chief executive of Sunderland MDC discusses the way the corporate management system has been designed to encourage elected members to become involved in policy making and to ensure that they receive adequate information. Other developments include the setting up of ward profiles.

92 CLEVELAND COUNTY COUNCIL

Report on the provision of an information service for members and officers
Cleveland CC, October 1974. 5 pp.

Argues a case for a comprehensive library and information service for officers and members and proposes that it should be provided jointly by the county library and the research and intelligence unit.

93 CLEVELAND COUNTY COUNCIL

An information service for members; a second report, by S.B. Hyde
Cleveland CC, March 1975. 14 pp.

Although committee chairmen were not unanimous in their support for the idea, the balance of opinion was in favour of creating a centralised library-based information service. Most chairmen felt that such a facility would need proper staffing and should meet two needs—for information *per se*, and to free members from the chore of locating and processing information.

94 GRAYSON, L.

Information services for the GLC elected member

Greater London Intelligence Quarterly, June 1974, (27), pp 5-9

Discusses the councillor's need for information and describes the early days of the GLC members' information service. 5 references. (An expanded version of an article in the *Library Association Record*, February 1974, 76(2), pp 21-22).

95 GRAYSON, L.

Members' information services; proceedings of a seminar held on 23 May 1974, at the County Hall

Greater London Intelligence Quarterly, September 1974, (28), pp 41-44

Report of a seminar organised for the London boroughs which examined the information problems of elected members in the boroughs and the GLC and looked at some existing services at the GLC, Hull, Hammersmith and, at the national level, at the House of Commons. 6 references.

96 HAWES, D.

Preparing members for action

Municipal Review, January 1975, 45(541), pp 307-308

The Community Services Officer of Harlow DC describes how he organised a series of seminars at which the political and social aims of the members could

be juxtaposed creatively against the practical and specialist knowledge of departmental officers.

97 HENDER, J.D.

Services to members

Public Finance and Accountancy, October 1974, 1(10), pp 321-324

Argues that elected members need effective support services to enable them to participate fully in the decision making process, and that existing provision is inadequate. Looks at the various types of service available including information services.

98 KERSHAW, P.B.

Information for corporate management

Public Finance and Accountancy, November 1974, 1(11), pp 358-360

Questions whether management information systems at present constituted present information in the most intelligible way, particularly to elected members. Describes what is being done in Sunderland including the development of 'achievement budgets' which are designed for easy comprehension by the layman.

99 PESCHEK, D.

Object lesson for political parties

Local Government Chronicle, 23 February 1973, 117(5529), p 231

Reviews a publication of the Nottinghamshire Temporary Co-ordinating Committee of the Labour Party which examines problems faced by councillors in carrying out their duties. Makes recommendations for providing councillors with more background information and statistical data.

100 SCOTT, G.

An information service for members of the Greater London Council

Parliamentarian, January 1976, 57(1), pp 67-68

Brief account of the information needs of GLC members and the services provided by the GLC research library's members' information service. 6 references.

101 SCOTT, G.

The members' information service in the Greater London Council

Local Government Studies, January 1977, pp 31-41

An expanded and updated version of the previous article. References.

Miscellaneous

102 BENINGTON, J.

How Bains turned the elected member into a business executive

Municipal Review, March 1976, 46(555), pp 337-338

Discusses the effect of management changes on the relationship between elected members and professional officers.

103 HELPING the member

District Councils Review, October 1974, p 273

Brief item on Hull's members' information service

104 PESCHEK, D.

More help for members

Local Government Chronicle, 14 November 1975, 121(5668), p 1063

Describes a series of tape/slide programmes designed to inform members about relevant issues before council and committee meetings developed by PA Management Consultants Ltd.

105 SIMKINS, A.

Support for councillors

Municipal Journal/Municipal Engineering Supplement, 29 March 1974, pp 19-20

Discusses the need for adequate information services for members and describes services at the GLC, Hull and Nottingham.

106 THORNHILL, W.

The squeeze on councillors

Local Government Chronicle, 14 November 1975, 121(5668), pp 1061-1062

Suggests that the influence of members in local government is threatened by management developments which confer more powers on officers, and by the increase in worker participation and public participation in local government affairs.

107 WALLIS, H.F.

The public and you—3. Support the councillor

District Councils Review, August 1974, pp 213-214

The councillor's greatest need is for information gathered from within and without the authority. This should be provided by qualified librarians and might include the indexing of council minutes and the compilation of ward profiles, as is done in Hull. Information from the authority's officers or from the political parties is hardly likely to be unbiased and independent information services would enable the councillor to fulfil his duty to his electors more effectively.

C. OFFICERS

General material

108 BROWN, I.

Periodicals are for perusal

Local Government Review, 11 October 1975, 139(41), pp 687-688

A brief look at the problems facing officers in acquiring information and a discussion of methods of controlling and disseminating periodical and press information.

109 HENDER, J.D.

The chief executive in action

Local Government Chronicle, 20 August 1976, 121(5708), pp 769-772

Emphasises the chief executive's need for relevant information and discusses the importance of leadership qualities and the effective use of limited time.

110 KENNINGTON, D.

Report of a seminar on the information needs of London's local government
GLC Intelligence Unit Quarterly Bulletin, December 1972, (21), pp 39-42

Outlines some of the problems involved in meeting the information needs of local government officers in London and describes what the GLC has achieved so far. An account is given of a seminar held at County Hall, London in June 1972 to identify the difficulties and to discuss how the GLC and the London boroughs might co-operate to solve these problems. 7 references.

111 KENNINGTON, D. and PRATT, G.E.C.

The information needs of local government officers in London

In EURIM: a European Conference on Research into the Management of Information Services and Libraries, presented by Aslib, 20-22 November 1973, Paris. Aslib, 1974, pp 38-48

The information services provided to London local government by the GLC intelligence unit are outlined and the results of a pilot survey into the information needs of officers in several London boroughs are discussed. 7 references.

112 KIRKLAND, K. editor

Research and information needs of London local government; proceedings of a one day seminar held at the County Hall, London on 20 June 1973
GLC Research Memorandum 427, 1974. 48 pp.

Topics covered at the seminar included management information for public libraries; the information needs of officers in departments of architecture, planning and valuation in four London boroughs; and indexing and abstracting services in local government.

113 PRATT, G.E.C. and FERGUSON, H.A.

A study of the information needs of London's local government officers
GLC Research Memorandum, 433, December 1973. 78 pp.

Report of a survey into the supply of, and demand for, technical information by officers in four London boroughs. The investigation examined in detail the sources of technical information used including public, departmental and special libraries while simultaneously obtaining data on the use of this information from a one-in-three sample of professional officers in the technical departments concerned. 15 references.

114 THOMPSON, D.P.

Secondary information sources in local government; a Diploma in Management Studies project
Preston Polytechnic, 1976. Unpaged.

Describes the results of a questionnaire survey of information needs and the

existing level of information provision in Wigan Metropolitan Borough, using a 10 per cent sample of officers. Also looks at developments in other authorities. References.

115 TROLL, T.

An information service for a new town development corporation

In Social planning; sources of information; proceedings of a one-day conference held at the Library Association, London, 29 October 1974, edited by Lesley Grayson. Library Association Reference, Special and Information Section, 1975, pp 28-30

Brief account of the services provided to Milton Keynes Development Corporation. 1 reference.

Information needs and services in planning

See also references 31, 44, 179-181, 260, 264.

Much of the library based work on planning information needs has been carried out by Brenda White in two large scale research projects financed by the Library Association (1968-1969) and the Office of Scientific and Technical Information (1971-1974). Her various publications are listed in chronological order at the end of this section.

Central government has also shown interest in the information needs of planners although mainly in relation to the data requirements of the new planning system.

116 DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT *and others*

General information system for planning

HMSO, 1972, 119 pp.

Although principally concerned with data needs, this report does include a useful general discussion of information needs and holdings in planning departments.

Other articles on various aspects of planning information needs include:

117 ALLAN, M.S.

Information and regional planning

Planner, September/October 1975, 61(8), pp 310-311

Stresses the importance of information in any complex society and outlines the functions of a regional information system in providing for the collection, storage, retrieval, processing and analysis of data about the evolving regional situation. 9 references.

118 ARDEN, R.J.

Countryside information; a literature review

Aslib Proceedings, August 1973, 25(8), pp 274-287

Reviews the literature of the countryside in three main areas—the natural enviro-

onment, man in the countryside, and regional descriptions—and discusses the major organisational and documentary sources of information in each.

119 COMMUNITY Land Act; information requirements

Burisa Newsletter, May 1976, (22), pp 15-18

Outlines the main provisions of the Act and discusses the implications of the more explicit consideration of land supply and development which it requires. A significant proportion of the information required will be 'soft' and therefore difficult to organise in a systematic way. 4 references.

120 JONES, I.

Planning and the parishes—1. Breaking the ice

Local Government Chronicle, 26 March 1976, 121(5685), pp 283-284

The planning officer of the Cotswolds DC describes how his authority discharges its statutory obligation to consult parish councils on planning applications. Methods used include liaison meetings with parish representatives and the supply of a simple chart outlining the operation of the development control system.

121 JONES, I.

Planning and the parishes—2. Information is power

Local Government Chronicle, 2 April 1976, 121(5686), p 312

Argues that the key to good relationships between parish and district councils is the effective provision of information on planning applications and procedures.

122 JONES, I.

Planning and the parishes—3. Parish pump faux pas

Local Government Chronicle, 9 April 1976, 121(5687), pp 335-336

Argues that parish council ignorance of the planning system is one of the reasons behind the difficulties district councils face in carrying out their statutory obligations with regard to planning applications. More information is needed at these basic levels of local government.

123 NOTTINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL. *Planning department*

Planning department libraries; a report of a questionnaire survey

The Department, 1971. 37 pp.

Before setting up its own library, the department surveyed trends in 45 other authorities covering stock, staffing, classification systems, services provided, etc.

124 WHITE, B.

Public library participation in planning

New Library World, April 1970, 71(838), pp 302-305

Suggests that public libraries have a role in public participation both by making up to date information publicly available and by providing information services to planning departments. 6 references.

125 WHITE, B.

Planners and information

Library Association, 1970. 170 pp. (Library Association Research Publication No.3)

Report of a survey of library resources in the planning field and of user needs. Suggests that the provision of planning information could be bettered by improving the physical availability of sources in planning organisations and in general libraries; by making planners aware of the wide range of sources already in existence; and by providing them with packaged, concentrated information which could be applied directly to practical situations. 31 references.

126 WHITE, B.

Current use of information in planning

In Information and urban planning; conference proceedings

Centre for Environmental Studies Information Paper No.8, 1969.

Volume 1, pp 85-115

Discusses some of the findings of the Library Association project on planning information.

127 WHITE, B.

Primary materials in urban and regional planning

Aslib Proceedings, April 1971, 23(4), pp 187-198

Looks particularly at land use planning information requirements and discusses two major kinds of primary source—data, and maps and plans. 16 references.

128 WHITE, B.

Source-book of planning information for use in urban and regional planning and in allied fields

Clive Bingley, 1971. 632 pp.

Comprehensive guide to documentary information sources in planning and related subjects.

129 WHITE, B.

Use of information in planning

Construction Industry Information Group Bulletin, January 1972, 2(1), pp 2-4

Urban and regional planning is a multi-disciplinary activity with three main areas of activity—practice, education and research. Each has a different pattern of information need and use and each rates different sources of information as most important. The Library Association study listed 14 categories of information but few planners exploit these fully, particularly where documentary information is concerned. 6 references.

130 WHITE, B.

Information services and their application to planning

Royal Town Planning Institute Journal, March 1973, 59(3), pp 133-136

Distinguishes between information systems and information services and identifies 50 core journals as the principal sources of continuing information to the planner. Describes the GLC and Department of the Environment abstracting services, together with a variety of secondary services in related subjects and disciplines. Deals briefly with machine indexing, KWIC (Key Word In Context)

indexing, citation indexing and the use of computers in information storage and retrieval. 4 references.

131 WHITE, B.

Information for planning—studies towards the collection, organisation and dissemination of information for planners; report of studies
Edinburgh University Planning Research Unit, June 1974. 138 pp.
(OSTI Report No.5198)

Report of a three-year research project which investigated the structure of planning information, journals as a source of planning information, unpublished and semi-published planning information, the dissemination of information and the development of libraries in the field.

In addition to the main report, six journal articles appeared at various stages during the project as follows:

132 WHITE, B.

Library services in planning
Surveyor, 16 March 1973, 141(4214), pp 38-39

133 WHITE, B.

A survey of planning libraries
Architects Journal, 25 April 1973, 157(17), p 971

134 WHITE, B.

Planning information; an interim report
New Library World, June 1973, 74(876), pp 128-130

135 WHITE, B.

Information for environmental planning
Aslib Proceedings, August 1973, 25(8), pp 288-299

136 WHITE, B.

'Soft' information; information for planning
Burisa Newsletter, April 1974, (12), pp 13-15

137 WHITE, B.

Planning information; a final report
New Library World, October 1974, 75(892), pp 217-218

138 WHITE, B.

The literature and study of urban and regional planning
Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974. 223 pp.

Part I discusses the nature of British planning, its literature, library services for planners and related research. Part 2 consists of a subject bibliography and guide to relevant journals, bibliographies and indexing and abstracting services.

Information Needs and Services in Social Welfare

The background to most of the studies of social welfare information needs

has been heavily affected by the structural changes in local authority social services departments in the early 1970s.

139 DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SECURITY

Report of the Committee on Local Authority and Allied Personal Social Services HMSO, 1968. Cmnd 3703.

Usually known as the Seebohm Report, this encouraged a multi-disciplinary approach to problems by recommending the setting up of single departments to be responsible for all welfare, children's and mental health services.

The British Library showed some interest in the problems of social services personnel in the INFROSS study based on Bath University in the early 1970s.

140 BATH UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

Investigation into the information requirements of the social sciences; the information needs of social workers

Bath University Library, February 1971. (INFROSS Research Report No.4)

Part of the large scale INFROSS project on the information needs of social scientists which found that social workers prefer informal channels of communication using only a few reference works for factual information. Suggests that professional institutions should maintain cumulative indexes of practical developments, act as clearing houses for unpublished material, and issue digests of research results.

141 BRITTAIN, J.M.

Information and its users; a review with special reference to the social sciences Bath University/Oriel Press, 1970. 208 pp.

Produced as an offshoot of the INFROSS project and including a resumé of work already done in the field of information needs in the social sciences. Bibliography.

142 LINE, M.B.

Information services in social welfare

New Library World, April 1973, 74(874), pp 79-80

Outlines the growth of information services in social services departments with comment on the variety of personnel involved and on the wide range of activities undertaken from public relations to forward planning. Information services required in this field are discussed with particular reference to those produced by the Department of Health and Social Security.

143 LINE, M.B.

Information requirements in the social sciences

In Access to the literature of the social sciences and the humanities; proceedings of the conference, New York City, April 5-6 1972. New York, Queen's College Press, 1974, pp 146-158

Claims that most projections of information needs in the social sciences tend to be preoccupied with the needs of research scholars to the neglect of practitioners. Based on findings from the INFROSS study. 16 references.

144 SMITH, J. and WEBLEY, M.

Information needs of social services departments
Social Work Today, 23 August 1973, 4(11), pp 343-346

Considers the objectivity of social service information and the fluidity of its various components. Reports on local government during the 1960s are analysed in terms of their awareness of information problems and the INFROSS project is described. 10 references.

British Library interest in social welfare information problems continued with the end of INFROSS and was catered for in its successor, DISISS (Design of Information Systems in the Social Sciences).

145 BATH UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

Design of information systems in the social sciences. User evaluation of an information service in social welfare; report of an interview and questionnaire study of the Wiltshire Social Services Staff Digest
Bath University Library, November 1973. 50 pp. (Research Reports: Series B No.1)

About half the Wiltshire social services personnel were asked to complete questionnaires assessing the Digest's value; the response was about 48 per cent. Overall the Digest did not fully satisfy needs; recommendations include the probable separation of the library bulletin from the main issue, reorganisation of the office filing system, provision of an information officer, and wider publicity for the department's library facilities.

Work on information needs in social welfare was also carried out by non-librarians in the later 1960s and early 1970s and two studies are of particular interest.

146 McCULLOCH, J.W. and BROWN, M.J.

A national social work interdisciplinary study of reading behaviour and helpful factors in professional practice
Clearing House for Local Authority Social Services Research, December, 1975, (12), pp 55-80

A study carried out in 1968-69, but not published at that time, based on three hypotheses concerning social workers' use and non-use of research and reading materials. The findings show, among other things, that individuals tend to concentrate on journals immediately relevant to existing knowledge, and that there is very little communication between colleagues in different disciplines.

147 McCULLOCH, J.W. and BROWN, M.

What do social workers read?
New Society, 1 October 1968, 12(316), p 570

Summarises the results of the above study.

148 LEIGH, A. and WHITE, M.

Information needs and planning in social services departments
Policy and Politics, December 1973, 2(2), pp 135-143

Reports the results of a questionnaire survey of social services managers in a London borough concerned in the preparation of a ten-year plan with the aim

of identifying areas of information shortfall. The study, which is still continuing, is mainly concerned with statistical management information but gives useful general information on information use and flow patterns in social services departments.

149 WHITE, M. and LEIGH, A.

Diagnosing long-term information problems

Long Range Planning, February 1974, 7(1), pp 27-32

Further comment on the same study.

The British Library's interest in social welfare information was rekindled in 1974 as the result of a forum on social welfare information held in Sheffield.

150 MANN, M.G. and WILSON, T.D.

Forum on social welfare library information research, Hallam Tower Hotel, Sheffield, 28-30 June 1974, report of proceedings together with background papers presented for the forum

University of Sheffield Postgraduate School of Librarianship and Information Science, 1974. 91 pp. (OSTI Report No. 5129)

Topics covered included areas of likely future research, training in information handling, and the information needs of research workers, social services departments and the public.

Following this forum the British Library financed three linked projects in social welfare information, one of which is now complete.

151 HUSTWIT, J.

Survey of social welfare information sources; report on the one year investigation funded by the British Library Research and Development Department, December 1975, and based at the National Institute of Social Work (December 1975-December 1976)

NISW, January 1977. Various paging.

Includes papers on the development of social welfare information resources in the 1970s, existing documentary sources, and plans for a social welfare information directory.

The second project to be set up after the Sheffield Forum is based at the Sheffield University Postgraduate School of Librarianship and Information Science.

152 INFORMATION services in local authority social services departments; preliminary review

Project INISS Research Note No.7, August 1976, 16 pp.

This is included as an example of the Research Note series issued by Project INISS (Information Needs and Services in Social Services Departments). The Notes are of varying availability and further information can be obtained from the project head, Dr T.D. Wilson or from the principal investigator, Mr D.Streatfield, Project INISS, Postgraduate School of Librarianship and Information Science, University of Sheffield, Western Bank, Sheffield S10 2TN.

Some idea of the aims and early results of Project INISS can also be gained from a few recent articles.

153 WILSON, T.D.

Information needs in local authority social services departments

In EURIM II: a European conference on the application of research in information services and libraries. Aslib, 1976, pp 182-187

154 WILSON, T.D.

Research priorities in social welfare library and information work

Journal of Librarianship, October 1975, 7(4), pp 252-261

Describes the results of a questionnaire survey designed to provide background information for the Sheffield Forum (see reference 150). The survey used a modified version of the Delphi technique to assess the relevance of possible research projects as reflected in the views of practitioners and information workers.

155 WILSON, T.D. and DUNN, A.C.

Library/information services in local authority social services departments; results of two surveys

Journal of Librarianship, July 1976, 8(3), pp 166-174

Describes some of the results of two brief questionnaire surveys of local authority social services departments in 1974. The results reveal wide variation in the nature of information services provided within these departments, a low level of public library involvement in specific information problems in the social services, and a 'passive' attitude from those public libraries which are involved. 3 references.

Aslib has also been active in the social welfare field with the establishment of a special working group in the early 1970s.

156 WEBLEY, M.

Information and library services in social welfare

Health and Social Services Journal, 20 January 1973, 83(4318), Pt.1, p 149

Brief comment on a conference held by the Aslib Social Sciences Working Group on Social Welfare Information which led, among other things, to the establishment of another formal group, the Association of Communicators in Social Services. This is usually known as the York Group and deals with communications and public relations issues.

157 WEBLEY, M.

The Aslib Social Sciences Working Group on Social Welfare Information; a review of its development and current activities

Aslib Proceedings, June/July 1976, 28(6/7), pp 243-247

Describes the development of the Group since 1970 including its short-lived plan for providing a specialised current awareness bulletin, SWIFT. Recent areas of interest include the establishment of a centralised clearing house for social welfare enquiries and the group has played a large part in stimulating research in the field of social welfare information.

158 ASLIB SOCIAL SCIENCES GROUP

Basic listing of resource material in social welfare, compiled by the Working Group on Information Needs in Social Welfare

Aslib Proceedings, June 1975, 27(6), pp 262-272

Brief annotated list of general reference material, government publications sources, research sources, directories, guides to the literature, statistics, social work journals, etc.

Other articles on social welfare information include:

159 BRITTAIN, J.M.

Information services for social welfare

Social Services Quarterly, Summer 1975, 49(1), pp 5-7

Outlines the information problems of social workers faced with ever-increasing amounts of literature and suggests some solutions, the main one being the appointment of specialist information officers to organise and disseminate information.

160 COOKE, M.

Local government information services and their relevance for the local authority social worker

Book Trolley, June 1973, 3(10), pp 6-7

Argues that there are particular problems in providing information services to social workers who are dispersed over a wide area and have multi-disciplinary needs. A broad based current awareness service disseminated to individual workers is suggested.

161 FRENCHMAN, K.

Information on social welfare

In Social planning; sources of information; proceedings of a one day conference held at the Library Association, London 29 October 1974, edited by Lesley Grayson. Library Association Reference, Special and Information Section, 1975, pp 31-33

Brief account of the information services available from the National Council of Social Service, the London Council of Social Service, the Department of Health and Social Security and other organisations. 19 references.

Information Needs and Services in Other Professions

162 ACCESS; an information service

GLC Development and Materials Bulletin, February 1974, 72 (2nd series), pp 7/1-7/4

Describes the information service in the GLC department of architecture and civic design.

163 BURBIDGE, M.

Information needs in social research

In Social planning; sources of information; proceedings of a one day conference held at the Library Association, London, 29 October 1974, edited by Lesley Grayson. Library Association Reference, Special and Information Section, 1975, pp 19-24

Describes some of the research carried out in the Sociological Research Branch of the Department of the Environment's Housing Developing Directorate and

comments on the demands which researchers in this field are likely to make on an information service. Also outlines some of the services provided by the Department of the Environment library. 7 references.

164 EVERSLEY, D.E.C.

Information and the social planner

In Social planning; sources of information; proceedings of a one day conference held at the Library Association, London, 29 October 1974, edited by Lesley Grayson. Library Association Reference, Special and Information Section, 1975, pp 3-7

Describes the growth of social planning research and documentation in recent years and outlines the requirements of an effective information service in this area. 9 references.

165 GOODEY, B.

Social research in new communities

Built Environment, April 1974, 4(4), p 233

Identifies one of the most important issues in this area as the need to capitalise on existing documented experience, to improve contact between practitioners and academics, and to develop a research clearing house. Proposes a national Social Development Information Exchange to improve the organisation and dissemination of information relevant to social research. 5 references.

166 PALMER, J.

The aims of social planning and the use of information

In Social planning; sources of information; proceedings of a one day conference held at the Library Association, London, 29 October 1974, edited by Lesley Grayson. Library Association Reference, Special and Information Section, 1975, pp 8-18

Outlines four different theoretical approaches to social planning and discusses how far it can be accommodated within the corporate planning structure of local government. Also examines the role and use of information in social planning and suggests that those involved in providing information have an important part to play in encouraging the flow of information and in counteracting the trend towards over-centralisation of decision making in local government. 21 references.

167 PARTINGTON, L.

New directions in transport; sources of information; proceedings of a one day conference, London, October 1973

Aslib, 1975

The morning sessions covered the information needs of researchers in transport planning with specific examples of presentation of illustrative material. The afternoon papers discussed general sources of information on railways, shipping and transport law.

168 RIX, C.F.

A multi-disciplinary approach to purchasing problems

Local Government Studies, July 1976, pp 43-57

Assesses the state of the art in local government purchasing and proposes a new strategy designed to improve overall purchasing performance and achieve better value for money. This multi-disciplinary approach involves using the skills of economists, statisticians, administrators and others including professional information officers. 3 references.

169 SHIFRIN, M.

Media resources—I LEA; library and information service
Assistant Librarian, September 1973, 66(9), pp 142-146

Describes the services offered by the I LEA's media resources centre to schools and colleges in the I LEA area.

170 SPINKS, M.

Training centre library
Training Newsletter (Local Government Training Board), 1 July 1973, (34), p 5

Brief item on Surrey county library's services to the county council training centre.

171 STILES, R.

Prevention rather than cure
Trade and Industry, 7 March 1975, Vol.18, pp 576-579

Describes the work of the Coventry Pollution Prevention Panel set up in 1971 to stimulate a two way flow of information between industry and local government officials with pollution control functions.

D. THE PUBLIC

See also references 258, 266-268.

This bibliography is principally concerned with the provision of 'technical' information services to officers and members but the public is also an integral part of local government and it is necessary to include some reference to community information provision. At central government level there has been considerable interest in the improvement of relationships between local government and the community and three central government-sponsored projects are of particular interest in this context; the 'Making towns better' studies of Sunderland, Oldham and Rotherham; the 'Inner area' studies of Lambeth, Liverpool and Birmingham; and the community development projects launched by the Home Office in 1969. The first has already been mentioned in connection with members' information services (see references 71 and 72) and its 'system perspective' on community management has come under some attack.

172 RUSTIN, M.

Whose total approach?
Municipal Journal, 6 June 1975, 83(23), pp 742-745

Criticises the approach adapted to urban problems by the 'Making towns better' studies, educational priority areas and other similar ventures in which the social

environment of a city is seen as a complex of related causal elements which have to be understood and acted on in a co-ordinated way if action is to be effective. Suggests that the end result may simply be more management and less public involvement and influence. The key to the problem is accessibility to information which should be the property of the whole community, not just government. 5 references.

The 'Inner area' studies were intended as a means of identifying the social and economic problems of decaying city centres and developing methods to overcome them. In all, over 40 reports on various aspects of Lambeth, Liverpool and Birmingham were produced and a summary of the consultants' final reports has been published.

173 DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Inner area studies; Liverpool, Birmingham and Lambeth; summaries of consultants' final reports
HMSO, 1977. 49 pp.

In information terms, one of the more interesting developments in these studies has been the notion of area management or the decentralisation of local government functions to make them more responsive. This process often involves the setting up of special information and advice services.

174 SIMKINS, A.

Towards area management
Municipal Journal, 21 March 1975, 83(12), pp 390-392

Discusses the implications of area management with special reference to development in West Norfolk District Council.

175 HORN, C.J. *and others*

Area management; objectives and structures. (First interim report of Area Management Monitoring Project)
Institute of Local Government Studies, 1977. 68 pp.

Assesses the benefits which might accrue from area management in six metropolitan districts (Dudley, Haringey, Kirklees, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Stockport and Liverpool) and includes comment on public information provision.

The community development projects were set up to find new ways of meeting the needs of people living in areas of severe social deprivation and one of their specific conclusions was the need to make information and resources available to deprived groups in order to let them press directly for change.

176 BATLEY, R. and EDWARDS, J.

The Urban Programme; a report on some Programme funded projects
British Journal of Social Work, Autumn 1974, 4(3), pp 305-331

Surveys six of the most frequently funded types of project which include general information and advice services for the community.

177 BUTCHER, H.

Neighbourhood information services; access or advocacy?
Journal of Social Policy, October 1976, 5(4), pp 375-388

Reviews two approaches to information provision and outlines their implications for work with individuals and groups. The approaches, known as the 'extension' and 'advocate organiser' models are then examined in the light of findings from research on the Information and Action Centre in West Cumbria.

- 178 LEES, R. and SMITH, G. *editors*
Action research in community development
Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975. 202 pp.

A review of experience gained at national and local level in the community development projects. Bibliography.

Local authorities have also responded to the call for improved communications with the public in a variety of ways. Formal public participation is one obvious example, and the following item is a useful guide to some of the many publications on this activity.

- 179 COCKETT, I. *compiler*
Public participation in planning; the British experience
2nd edition
GLC Research Bibliography No.55, July 1976. 42 pp.

Examples of specialised services include local authority information and advice services of various kinds.

- 180 COOPER, S.
Planning advice centres
Municipal Journal, 14 June 1974, 82(24), pp 713-715

Reviews the progress of three centres in Lambeth, Leeds and Winchester and suggests that the attendance figures do not show overwhelming public interest.

- 181 GRIFFIN, B.
Planning information in Lambeth
In Social planning; sources of information; proceedings of a one day conference held at the Library Association, London 29 October 1974, edited by Lesley Grayson. Library Association Reference, Special and Information Section, 1975, pp 34-37

Describes the ways in which information is recorded and presented to the public at the Lambeth Planning Advice Centre. Also comments on the types of enquiries received and the methods used to deal with them. 2 references.

- 182 HARLOE, M., MINNS, R. and STOKER, J.
Housing advice centres
Shelter, October 1976. 28 pp.

Analyses the organisational background and constraints on individual centres and discusses their effect on housing policy.

- 183 SLIZOWSKI, L.W.S.
Have the Housing Centres failed?
Housing Monthly, October 1974, 10(3), pp 16-17

Areas where the Centres seem to have failed include maintenance of a register

of rented accommodation. There is also a need for better research and statistical information and improved educational and publicity services.

184 GREATER LONDON COUNCIL

Greater London Council information centres; transcript of proceedings, seminar, 28 May 1974

GLC, 1974. Various paging. Typescript.

A verbatim record of discussions about the role of the GLC's then experimental public information centres between GLC and London borough officers and members.

185 SIMKINS, A.

Spreading the information

Municipal Journal, 16 August 1974, 82(33), pp 993-994

Describes the role and functions of the first six experimental public information centres set up by the GLC.

186 SMITH, G.

Your advice supermarket

Municipal Journal, 4 April 1975, 83(14), pp 453, 455

The Westway Centre in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea is described as a rudimentary model for a comprehensive advice and information centre for the public. It includes social services area teams and home helps, council information services, a community relations adviser, Citizens' Advice Bureau, full-time solicitor, housing action centre and a voluntary bureau.

Community information centres have, of course, come under some attack, particularly from those who argue that they fail to serve the most deprived members of the community.

187 WARD, J.

Equality of information

Municipal Journal, May 1974, 82(20), pp 595-598

Questions whether the establishment of community information centres really benefits the disadvantaged who have the greatest need for information. It is important to decide whether such services should be located specifically to attract these groups, as opposed to 'high street' locations which may be relatively inaccessible to them.

Other authorities have opted for a mobile approach to improving contact with the electorate, particularly in rural areas.

188 DERBY, C.

Taking advice to the people

Local Government Chronicle, 18 June 1976, 121(5699), pp 569-570

Describes a day's work on the Dacorum District Council mobile advice service which toured the rural parts of the district until it was scrapped by a newly elected council.

189 GOODALL, C.

Members on the move

District Councils Review, May 1976, pp 127-128

Report on the successful conversion of a bus into a mobile members' surgery and exhibition centre by Reading District Council.

Further possibilities include the use of unconventional information dissemination methods.

190 WADE, G.

Video in the community

Video and Audio-Visual Review, February 1975, 1(4), pp 32-34

Describes the use of community television in the London boroughs of Hammer-smith and Lewisham.

However, the rationale behind the development of these various kinds of public communications devices has been questioned.

191 MALLABER, N.

The apathy trap

Municipal Journal, 8 October 1976, 84(41), p 1129

Challenges the commonly held view that political apathy at local level is due to poor communications between authority and electorate. Argues, instead, that apathy is endemic, that political actions are largely based on habit and that information merely conserves or reinforces existing attitudes.

There has also been a considerable increase in the number and variety of voluntary information and advice centres. The following articles simply indicate this trend and a great deal more information is available from the organisations concerned.

192 BELL, P.

Downtown advice; high street information service

Assistant Librarian, June 1976, 69(6), pp 106-107

Describes the work of the Luton Consumer Advice Centre and considers the relationship of such centres to public libraries. Potential areas of co-operation include the use of libraries as places to distribute leaflets and to receive enquiries as well as the provision of back-up information.

193 CLEGG, G.

Information services for consumer advice centres

Assistant Librarian, June 1976, 69(6), pp 104-105

Describes the work of the Advice Centre Servicing Unit set up by the Consumers' Association to provide back-up to the locally established consumer advice centres. Also comments on the growth of other types of specialist advice centres and suggests that local public libraries could offer professional guidance on information provision and systems.

194 FORREST, R.

Help me if you can. . .

Assistant Librarian, October 1975, 68(9), pp 158-160

Discusses the role of Citizens' Advice Bureaux in information provision and examines the potential role of public libraries as back-up agencies.

195 HADDEN, T.

Guidance for consumers

New Society, 18 September 1975, 33(676), pp 38-39

Comments on the proliferation of consumer advice organisations, many of which provide general support to consumers rather than helping individuals. However, some local authorities including Lambeth and Wolverhampton have gone a stage further by providing high street 'consumer shops'.

196 NATIONAL CONSUMER COUNCIL

The fourth right of citizenship; a review of local advice services: a discussion paper

National Consumer Council, 1977. 80 pp. 43 references.

Reviews general and specialised information and advice centres, with particular attention to centres dealing with consumer, housing, legal, financial and neighbourhood matters.

In spite of views expressed that public libraries could play an important role in community information provision, very few have made active efforts in this area and it is only recently that the British Library has shown interest in this aspect of public library work.

197 ASSER, M.

Information and advisory services; the Leicestershire experience

New Library World, June 1974, 75(888), pp 114, 117

Suggests possible patterns of co-operation between advisory services and public libraries. It is felt that, where possible, these should be planned together and housed in the same building.

198 HENDRY, J.D.

The role of the public library in community information services

Scottish Library Association News, March/April 1976, (132), pp 37, 39

Suggests that if it is accepted that improved information services are of value to the community and local government, then existing institutions—the public libraries—are the obvious establishments to use.

199 HENNESSY, J.A.

Urban information management

In Studies in library management 3. Clive Bingley, 1976, pp 36-50

Looks at the nature of information as a source of influence in the urban environment and asks how public libraries should react to the information needs of the various groups in society. 54 references

200 JACKAMAN, P.

Public libraries, information and the community

Assistant Librarian, February 1973, 66(2), pp 18-21

Argues that there is considerable duplication of effort between the various public and private agencies giving information to the public. Public libraries can take a number of courses—expand into fully fledged information and advice centres, try to take over other information agencies, restrict activity to referral, or act as a back-up or support service. All these options require co-operation with the other agencies. 7 references.

201 STREATFIELD, D.

Social work and community action

Assistant Librarian, March 1974, 67(3), pp 39-41

Discusses the role of the public library in providing information services to social workers and to the community at large. 3 references.

202 TOTTERDELL, B. and BIRD, J.

The effective library; report of the Hillingdon project on public library effectiveness

Library Association, 1976. 207 pp.

Defines effectiveness as the extent to which libraries succeed in meeting the book and information needs of the community. The concept of need is defined, output measures described and the results of several surveys presented.

203 WILSON, A.

The role of the library in information services—2. The consumer rising; the public library in the information and advice market

In Peebles '76; proceedings of the 62nd Annual Conference of the Scottish Library Association, 24-27 May 1976. The role of the library in a changing society, edited by A.G.D. White.

SLA, 1976, pp 46-57

The market for information and advice is booming and agencies are almost as numerous as types of information. A major problem is the acquisition, storage and retrieval of information and on-line systems seem to hold the answer. Looks at the role of public libraries in the information field. 7 references.

Public library involvement in community information provision is further advanced in the United States and the British Library Research and Development Department commissioned a study of developments some two years ago.

204 WALLEY, E.D. and DAVINSON, D.E.

Developments in community information services in public libraries in the United States; a state of the art report and literature guide

Leeds Polytechnic Department of Librarianship, October 1975. 123 pp.

Reviews major trends in the literature of community information services and examines a number of associated developments in library education and research. Also looks in detail at the federally supported neighbourhood information centers project designed to establish community information centres in branch libraries in Atlanta, Cleveland, Detroit, Houston and Queens Borough, New York City. Concludes with an annotated bibliography of 133 references on community information provision.

A few recent articles on developments overseas are also of interest in the field of community information provision.

205 BOYLE, J.M.

Urban information systems; a social science perspective on their design and implementation

Drexel Library Quarterly, January/April 1976, 12(1/2), pp 27-47

Outlines the advantages of the public library as an access point for the public to local government and describes the New York Neighbourhood Project which included the district manager experiment designed to improve local communications. References.

206 MONROE, M.E.

Community development as a mode of community analysis

Library Trends, January 1976, 24(3), pp 497-514

A survey on current community involvement among selected public libraries is described. The results cover such factors as the degree of emphasis placed by the library on involvement in the community, staff training and training needs, approaches to library collaboration with community agencies and groups, and evaluation of co-operation programmes.

The whole of this issue of *Library Trends* is devoted to community analysis, a technique which is gaining in popularity in Britain.

207 TAGUE, J. *and others*

The distribution of community information; the role of the computer and computer based networks

Aslib Proceedings, September 1976, 28(9), pp 314-321

The concept of community information is described and related to other forms of information, and the sources of information used by the residents of a community are determined. A 'computer assistant', CACTIS, for a community information centre is described and different types of information network are discussed. The application of CACTIS is a study of community information provision in South Western Ontario is described.

SECONDARY SERVICES AND CO-OPERATION BETWEEN AUTHORITIES IN INFORMATION PROVISION

Details of the services provided by libraries and information units are, of course, included in many of the more general articles already quoted. The following are specifically concerned with information dissemination techniques and with the role of inter-authority co-operation in information provision.

A. BULLETINS AND OTHER FORMS OF INFORMATION DISSEMINATION

See also reference 145.

208 BATH UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

Design of information systems in the social sciences. The relationship between the usefulness and style of secondary publications; an experimental information service for planners

Bath University Library, 1974. 72 pp. (Research Reports: Series B No.3)

An experiment based on an information service for planners run in conjunction with *Geo Abstracts* is described. 48 styles of abstracting journal were produced which, although based on the same source material, differed in depth of coverage, frequency of publication, content of entry and indexes. Each style was sent for a trial period to four planners and results show a distinction between expressed and actual preferences. 7 references.

209 CHIRGWIN, F.J.

Local government literature

Library Association Record, August 1965, 67(8), pp 270-271

Describes a monthly current awareness bulletin, covering books and journals, compiled by the reference library at Gateshead for officers and members. One of the earliest recorded instances of such a service.

210 GOMERSALL, A.

The single homeless

In Social planning; sources of information; proceedings of a one day conference held at the Library Association, London, 29 October 1974, edited by Lesley Grayson. Library Association Reference, Special and Information Section, 1975, pp 44-55

Describes the work involved and the practical problems encountered in producing a literature review aimed specifically at elected members. The finished review, published in the GLC Research Library series *London Topics*, appears as an appendix.

211 KETLEY, P.M. *editor*

International workshop of secondary service producers. York, December 1975; edited proceedings

British Library, 1976. 80 pp.

Proceedings of a conference on the DISISS project which includes comment on abstracting services relevant to local government.

212 LUNIN, L.F.

The Biblio-Profile; a two-in-one package of information: its preparation, production, marketing, uses

American Society for Information Science Journal, March/April 1976, 27(2), pp 113-117

Although not produced in a local government context, the Biblio-Profile is very similar in content and approach to the literature reviews produced in some British local government information services. Includes a useful guide for authors as an appendix. 8 references.

213 RESEARCH and intelligence in the Scottish local authorities; interim report to the Leverhulme Foundation

Planning Exchange, January 1976. Various paging.

Describes the results of an experimental current awareness bulletin provided for elected members in selected Scottish local authorities. A restricted circulation document; further details on the project from the Librarian, Planning Exchange, 186 Bath Street, Glasgow G2 4HG.

214 SCOTT, A. and MOODY, M.

Community projects; a case study

In Social planning; sources of information; proceedings of a one day conference held at the Library Association, London, 29 October 1974, edited by Lesley Grayson. Library Association Reference, Special and Information Section, 1975, pp 38-43

Describes a case study on the collection and presentation of information in response to an enquiry on community development projects. 20 references and additional bibliography.

215 TRIPP, P.

Audio cassettes for local government information

Assistant Librarian, January 1977, 70(1), pp 6-7

Describes East Sussex county library's local government unit's use of audio cassettes as an alternative to print in providing information to officers and members. A list of suppliers is included.

B. CO-OPERATION

See also references 48, 52, 57, 60.

216 CONDLIFFE, J.N.

Urban information network in New York

Special Libraries, November 1976, 67(11), pp 495-497

URBIN, formed in February 1974, is an informal local group of urban affairs librarians in the New York area. It is based on a directory and objectives include the monitoring of local urban research. Several sub-groups have been formed including groups on urban research and New York City documents. 2 references.

217 DAY, N.J.

Centralised and co-operative abstracting for London local government

In Research and information needs of London local government; seminar, 1973. *GLC Research Memorandum* 427, 1974, pp 35-37

Brief look at the potential for greater co-operation in the production of current awareness bulletins in the London area.

218 DUCKETT, R.J. *editor*

YADLOGIS; a success story in co-operation

Aslib Proceedings, April 1977, 29(4), pp 158-167

Describes the development of a co-operative journal abstracting system, the Yorkshire and District Local Government Indexing Service, set up by eight libraries in north east England. 5 references.

219 FEATHERSTONE, T.

LOGA; where is it going?

In Research and information needs of London local government; seminar, 1973. *GLC Research Memorandum* 427, 1974, pp 33-34

Brief account of the co-operatively produced monthly Local Government Anno-

tations Service compiled by a consortium of nine London borough public libraries.

220 MILLER, E.K.

RUIN; a network for urban and regional studies libraries
Special Libraries, November 1973, 64(11), pp 498-504

This network covers 26 Washington DC urban studies libraries and co-operative ventures include the development of a union list of serials, education for urban librarians and co-operative cataloguing. 9 references.

221 The SOCIAL Work Information Bulletin; report on an experimental information service; interim report
Project INISS, January 1977. 39 pp.

Restricted circulation document describing the initial analysis of data derived from detailed monitoring of the co-operatively produced *SWIB* Bulletin. Further details from Dr T.D. Wilson or Mr D. Streatfield, Project INISS, Postgraduate School of Librarianship and Information Science, University of Sheffield, Western Bank, Sheffield S10 2TN.

222 STOKES, P. and GRAYSON, L.

An experiment in the exchange of secondary information sources in local government
Library Association Record, November 1975, 77(11), pp 261-262

Brief account of a co-operative arrangement between the GLC research library and the science and technology department of Birmingham public libraries involving the exchange and reprinting of abstracting bulletins. 5 references.

223 TELL, B.

Regional co-operation in information
Unesco Bulletin for Libraries, May/June 1976, 30(3), pp 130-139, 146

Suggests a number of ways in which information service networks might co-operate at the regional level to build up basic resources, collections and stores; to provide collective retrieval tools; to supply regional information services; to develop communications networks; and to train users and information officers.

224 WALKER, J.R.A.

Inter-authority co-operation in information collection and use
Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development, 1975. 5 pp.

Paper presented at the Symposium on Documentation for Urban Management, 19-21 November 1975 in Paris. Discusses information needs in local government, stressing the variety of sources from which relevant information may be derived, and looks at the potential for co-operation between authorities in information handling. A number of existing British co-operative ventures are also described.

The implications of inter-authority relationships and information flow have also been considered at wider levels.

225 HARRIS, R.

Inter-authority decision making; some implications for local government

Local Government Studies, July 1976, 2(3), pp 17-26

Considers the effect of reorganisation on local authority decision making from the viewpoint of inter-authority relationships and argues that careful consideration needs to be given to developing information flows, policy analysis and research to support the processes of inter-authority decision making.

INFORMATION RETRIEVAL

Little has been written on information retrieval in British local government information services and developments in formal systems (thesauri, computer-based retrieval, etc.) have tended to take place in other countries. Brenda White is one of the few British library researchers to look in detail at this issue and has developed a special classification/thesaurus for planning. Details of her work are given in references 124-136.

The GLC research library is the only service to have made extensive use of computerised information retrieval methods.

226 WATTS, C. and PEACOCK, A.

The London Research and Information Register

GLC Intelligence Unit Quarterly Bulletin, September 1971, (16), pp 25-34

Covers the development of the Register as a computerised information storage and retrieval system serving London local government. Based on an IBM programme package, Document Processing System, used in conjunction with a Magnetic Tape Selectric Typewriter. Superseded by the ICI-based ACOMPLIS system. 8 references.

227 THOMAS, P.A.

A KWIC index to the GLDP Inquiry transcripts

GLC Intelligence Unit Quarterly Bulletin, March 1973, (22), pp 5-11

Describes the compilation of a computer produced Key Word In Context index to the nine million word transcript of the Greater London Development Plan public inquiry.

228 THOM, W.

ACOMPLIS; a computerised information service

Greater London Intelligence Quarterly, March 1975, (33), pp 15-17

Briefly describes the information problems faced by the GLC and gives an account of the computerised information storage and retrieval system used by the research library to meet them. The system is named ACOMPLIS (A COMputerised London Information System) and based on the ICI ASSASSIN suite of programmes. 2 references.

229 THOM, W.

ACOMPLIS; the organisation of soft information

In Urban and regional information systems; proceedings of Seminar C. PTRC Summer Annual Meeting, University of Warwick, England, July 1975. Planning and Transport Research and Computation (International) Company Ltd., 1975, pp 41-49

Discusses the problems involved in communicating by words as opposed to communicating by numbers and looks at the possibility of an international urban information network. 4 references.

230 THOM, W.

ACOMPLIS; London's answer to the urban documentation problem
Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 1975, 9 pp.

Paper presented at the Symposium on Documentation for Urban Management 19-21 November 1975 in Paris. Describes the nature of information problems faced by officers and members in the GLC with particular reference to the difficulties of establishing a corporate store of information. ACOMPLIS is described and the international implications of such an approach to the problems of handling urban information discussed.

The only other relevant computer-based services to be described in detail are experimental systems used in the House of Commons library in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

231 HALL, J.L.

Experimental current awareness service for the social sciences
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority Research Group, 1969. 43 pp.

232 COUCHMAN, N.E.

Computer program documentation for the experimental current awareness service for the social sciences
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority Research Group, 1969. 38 pp.

233 HALL, J.L. and others

An experimental current awareness service in the social sciences
Journal of Documentation, March 1970, 26(1), pp 1-21

Details are given of an experimental service sponsored by the Office of Scientific and Technical Information as part of a programme to test the suitability of established computer techniques in the social sciences. The entries were prepared in the House of Commons library and computer processed by the UKAEA Culham laboratory. Weekly current awareness bulletins were produced and distributed to over 40 MPs according to their expressed interests.

234 POOLE, J., SCOTT, G. and ELLIS, C.

Information retrieval from Hansard and statute law; the House of Commons Library/IBM project
Parliamentary Affairs, 1976, (29), pp 421-436

Deals with Parliamentary questions and statute law. Describes an experimental project at the end of 1973 which arose out of an offer from IBM UK Ltd. to make a joint assessment of the applicability of its expertise to the library's information.

Manual information retrieval systems are much more common in local government information services but have received relatively little attention in the literature.

235 LOCAL AUTHORITIES MANAGEMENT SERVICES AND COMPUTER COMMITTEE

Filing and information retrieval through classification and coding
LAMSAC, June 1976, 23 pp.

Discusses the inadequacies of existing filing systems used in many authorities and describes a model system.

236 SALMON, G. and KELLY, D.

An approach to information monitoring; the objectives
Burisa Newsletter, March 1976, (21), pp 11-13

Describes a manual index to council policy decisions developed by South Yorkshire County Council's information section.

237 WHITE, P.

'Selling' qualitative information
Burisa Newsletter, July 1976, (23), pp 8-9

Describes an information storage and retrieval system set up by Derbyshire county planning department's data and monitoring group and using the local press as input. The material is indexed using a standard thesaurus, recorded on an optical coincidence card system and microfiched under the supervision of a qualified librarian. 2 references.

One further area of interest, although not strictly concerned with information retrieval, is the use of tele-facsimile in the transmission of information between authorities.

238 BRENT LONDON BOROUGH. *Town Clerk and Chief Executive's Department*
Organisation and methods survey on document facsimile machines
London Borough of Brent, September 1974. Various paging.

Considers compatibility between different commercially available machines, operating costs, speeds, etc. The bulk of the report consists of reprints of studies carried out by the GLC research library and the National Water Council. The GLC study involved the experimental transmission of the daily press bulletin to the London Borough of Bromley for reprinting and circulation.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTATION

See also references 227, 235-237.

One of the problems of dealing with local government documentation is that its recent growth can make bibliographical control at local or national level difficult.

239 EVERSLEY, D.E.C. and MOODY, M.

The growth of planning research since the early 1960s
Social Science Research Council, 1976. 87 pp.

240 GRAYSON, L.

British local government documentation
Government Publications Review, 1976, 3(2), pp 203-211

Outlines trends leading to greater awareness of the importance of information and documentation within local government. Pays special attention to the chang-

ing information needs of the public and elected member. Some of the major categories of documentation produced by local authorities are identified and evaluated in terms of their effectiveness as methods of communication. 44 references.

241 GRAYSON, L.

Urban documentation; its nature and purpose

Journal of Librarianship, October 1975, 7(4), pp 229-251

A rather wider look at the kinds of information used by local government in its roles as a statutory body, provider of services, and servant of the people. 71 references.

242 KENNINGTON, D. and GRAYSON, L.

The nature and use of urban documentation

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 1975. 12 pp.

Paper presented at the Symposium on Documentation for Urban Management, 19-21 November 1975 in Paris. Outlines recent changes in British local government and their effect on information use. Describes various kinds of documentation produced by local authorities themselves, central government and commercial publishing organisations. 21 references.

A resumé of the complete symposium appeared in the *Greater London Intelligence Quarterly*, September 1975, (32), pp 37-40

The national library network in Britain has only recently turned its attention to the problems of the collection and control of local government documentation but the problems are akin to those in other areas of social science documentation as discussed in the early 1970s.

243 FULFORD, R.J.

The British Museum Library and the collection of primary material

Aslib Proceedings, April 1971, 23(4), pp 199-200

The Copyright Act has provided the British Museum library with large quantities of social science ephemera but a more positive acquisition policy is needed. The future may lie in concentrating on material of national importance while local material is collected by local institutions.

244 LINE, M.B.

Primary materials in the social sciences; conclusions

Aslib Proceedings, April 1971, 23(4), pp 203-206

Primary materials are found in a wide variety of formats, not always documentary. Some are difficult to collect, store and access and national control is necessary. The mechanics of this may not be difficult but collections must be advertised and a national policy for collection implemented.

245 PEMBERTON, J.E.

Access to primary materials in the social sciences

Aslib Proceedings, January 1970, 22(1), pp 22-30

Comments on the difficulty of obtaining access to non-periodical material in

the social sciences and recommends the establishment of a National Documents Library or a network of specialised collections. If an NDL was set up it would be a joint deposit library covering both domestic and foreign literature and would also maintain a register of collections in other libraries.

Experience in the industrial sector may also be of value.

246 HOLLOWAY, A.H., RIDLER, E.H. and YATES, B.

Information work with unpublished reports
Deutsch, 1976. 302 pp.

Deals with the organisation of unpublished reports in industrial concerns and examines the role of the National Reports Centre which collects and makes available thousands of reports, and the company-based information unit which has to acquire, store and index its own company's documentation.

Lack of bibliographical control of local documents is also common in Canada and the United States and the problems continue even though libraries in these countries have paid them greater attention than their British equivalents.

247 PRESSER, C.

Canadian provincial and municipal documents; the mystery explained
Government Publications Review, Winter 1975, 2(1), pp 17-25

Discusses the nature of library acquisition, organisation and retrieval of such documents. The lack of adequate bibliographical control is attributed to the historical development of Canada and the diversity of government organisations and their publishing practices. 41 references.

248 PROSS, P.A. and PROSS, C.A.

Canadian provincial government publishing, recent developments
Government Publications Review, Spring 1974, 1(3), pp 257-268

Reviews progress since the late 1960s in the improvement of provincial document collections. Reorganisations of government departments during that period have facilitated the discovery and acquisition of documents, a reliable flow of material to libraries, and the production of more extensive bibliographies. 29 references.

249 SCOLLIE, F.B.

Every scrap of paper; access to Ontario's municipal records
Canadian Library Journal, January/February 1974, 31(1), pp 8-16

Outlines the administrative and legal traditions impeding bibliographical control of, and citizens access to, municipal documentation in Ontario. Also lists the kinds of documents produced by local authorities in Canada. 20 references.

250 TRIPP, P.

On the tracks of municipal government publications in Canada
Canadian Library Journal, November/December 1971, 28(6), pp 464-467

Criticises the major bibliographical sources as either too random in coverage or too inaccessible to be of much use. The most promising effort towards municipal document control is the work of the Canadian Council on Urban and Reg-

ional Research which produces *Urban and Regional References*. Recommends that each municipality, through a bye-law, should designate a library to be responsible for listing all its published documents and for sending cataloguing details to a central point for inclusion in a national listing.

251 CARMACK, B.D.

South Dakota public documents; report of a study
Government Publications Review, Spring 1974, 1(3), pp 251-256

The Interim Public Documents Study Commission concluded that the key problems in the publication and distribution of state documents were a lack of any clear understanding of what constitutes a public document; confused laws on the printing and distribution of documents; and the lack of a depository system. 3 references.

252 HERNON, P.

Municipal publications; their collection and use in reference service
Special Libraries, January 1973, 64(1), pp 29-33

The importance of municipal publications lies in their detailed statistical data and bibliographical citations and the fact that the information contained in them is not normally available elsewhere. However, since little has so far been done to implement co-operative programmes for bibliographic control the acquisition of irregularly published municipal documents is very difficult. 8 references.

253 HERNON, P. and ALURI, R.

Municipal publications; a selective bibliographic guide to 153 cities
Government Publications Review, Spring 1975, 2(2), pp 127-165

Bibliographic control of such documents varies from place to place but is usually irregular creating problems for librarians wanting to gain access to them. This bibliography provides selective information for about 87 per cent of the US cities eligible for inclusion in the Greenwood Press *Index to Current Urban Documents*.

254 HILBURGER, M.J.

The state of the art; bibliographic control and organisation of local documents
Illinois Libraries, April 1975, 57(4), pp 269-271

Discusses Chicago municipal reference library's approach to this problem and includes a discussion and critique of the Greenwood Press *Index to Current Urban Documents* and its supporting microfiche collection.

255 LEWY, C.W.

Urban documents as reference tools
Government Publications Review, Spring 1974, 1(3), pp 269-275

Stresses the value of local government documents as a source of otherwise unobtainable information and identifies a number of factors which limit their use as reference tools in the USA. These include the lack of systematic listings, restricted physical availability, insufficient depth of indexing, and confusing publication conventions including the appearance of the same document in a number of different forms. (Also published in *Illinois Libraries*, April 1975, 57(4), pp 292-296).

256 O'SHANNON, M.

For the control of municipal documents
Special Libraries, March 1970, 61(3), pp 127-130

The increasing demand for bibliographic control and collection of such documents has led to the establishment of urban data centres such as New York's Municipal Reference and Research Center which co-ordinates all the city's document collections, retains its own reference library staff and serves as a central distribution and sales point for city publications. 8 references.

257 O'SHANNON, M.

The ebbing of municipal documents and the flow of public information in New York
Government Publications Review, Spring 1976, 3(1), pp 51-60

Describes the New York Municipal Reference and Research Center and assesses the factors behind its lack of complete success. Reasons include the lack of regulations governing the publication of city records, problems of document confidentiality, and opposition from other sectors of the authority. A major problem was the failure of the authority to see documentation and information dissemination as an important function.

258 PUBLIC access to information; research study

Northwestern University Law Review, May/June 1973 (entire issue)

A study of public access to documents in Illinois and Chicago which includes federal, state and local documents. Case studies are used to show the degree of success in obtaining requested material and the volume concluded with a discussion of the effects of computers on public access to government information.

In France there are also problems in the bibliographical control of urban and other local documentation. One reaction has been the establishment of a co-operative, commercial organisation to collect such material, microfiche it, and disseminate information about it in regular current awareness bulletins.

259 GILLE, D.

Mise en place du réseau français de documentation sur l'aménagement et l'urbanisme
Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 1975. 6 pp.

Paper presented at the Symposium on Documentation for Urban Management, 19-21 November 1975 in Paris. Discusses the services provided by Micro-Urba, an organisation based on the microfiche and sale of unpublished and semi-published documents on French urban planning and management.

The remainder of this section covers articles on various kinds of local government document.

260 ALLAN, G.E.

Copyright on planning application documents
Journal of Planning and Environment Law, March 1976, pp 151-153

Under the present rules, few local planning authorities allow the public to take

copies of such documents and the Dobry Report on development control (HMSO, 1975. 248 pp) has argued that this is unfair to *bona fide* objectors. Possible methods of overcoming the problem are outlined.

261 BLOXSIDGE, R.

The local authority contribution; a bibliographic note
Town Planning Review, October 1975, 46(4), pp 466-480

Describes the nature of local authority publications on conservation and preservation, using information from a collection of such documents which is to be stored permanently in the library of the University of Liverpool. Comments on their quality as publications as well as their content.

262 BROWN, I.

Agenda
Local Government Review, 24 January 1976, 140(4), pp 51-52

Gives practical advice on the preparation of committee agendas in local government to ensure that the elected member is adequately informed about the business he undertakes.

263 BROWN, I.

Documents temporarily out of office
Local Government Review, 8 May 1976, 140(19), pp 292-293

Looks at the need to establish effective procedures for recording the movement of original documents.

264 GOSS, P.G. and OAKLEY, M.R.

The information challenge of reorganisation
Planner, April 1976, 62(4), pp 75-77

Uses information from a specially commissioned survey to assess the response of local authorities to the recommendations of Department of the Environment Circular 74/73 (Local Government Act 1972. Town and country planning; co-operation between authorities) on the establishment of planning information and research services and the free exchange of information between counties and districts.

265 PAINTER, T.

The annual report
Local Government Review, 16 August 1975, 139(33), pp 571-572

Argues that if committee reports throughout the year are informative and abreast of current developments, one of the main justifications of annual reports is removed. However, they can serve a purpose as an instrument of policy review although only if coupled with the effective day-to-day provision of information.

266 RICHARDS, D.

Why not write English?
Municipal Journal, 24 May 1974, 82(21), pp 637-639

Comments on the poor public image of local government fostered by its apparent inability to produce attractively designed forms or well written letters.

267 SMITH, P.

The facts about the civic press—1.

Municipal Review, January 1976, 46(553), pp 292-293

The first part of a report by the Association of Metropolitan Authorities' press and information officer on answers to a questionnaire on local authority newspapers. Covers methods of production, costs, advertising, distribution, public reaction, etc.

268 SMITH, P.

The facts about the civic press—2.

Municipal Review, February 1976, 46(554), pp 321-322

DEVELOPMENTS OUTSIDE BRITAIN

Although the local government structures of other countries differ from those in Britain the experience of documentary information services are often remarkably similar and useful for comparison.

A. CANADA

See also references 247-250.

269 BARCELO, M., CAMPBELL, H.C. and YOUNG, D.A.

Information for urban affairs in Canada

Canadian Council on Urban and Regional Research, 1971, 80 pp.

Studies the need for, and sources of, current urban information in Canada. Proposes the establishment of an urban information exchange scheme which would include libraries as an important link. Also emphasises the need for professionally qualified information staff in this area.

270 WEATHERHEAD, B.A.

Municipal affairs library

Ontario Library Review, September 1970, 54(3), pp 162-163

Brief item on this library established in Toronto 1940.

B. UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

See also references 3, 4, 5, 251-258.

271 BOCKMAN, E.J.

Municipal reference libraries

Library Journal, 15 April 1962, 87(8), pp 1545-1547

Discusses the laws authorising the creation and definition of scope of the municipal reference libraries of New York, St Louis, Milwaukee, Cleveland, Cincinnati, Chicago, Baltimore, San Diego, Detroit and Honolulu.

272 NEW YORK Municipal Reference Library 50th anniversary

Municipal Reference Library Notes, March 1963, vol. 37, pp 58-78

273 PINKNEY, G.

DPL and MRL; the ties that bind

Government Publications Review, 1975, 2(4), pp 359-361

Describes the functions of the Detroit municipal reference library, a department of the Detroit public library. It is the working library of the city government, and acts as a depository for all municipal documents. Founded in 1945.

274 SCHWAB, B.

Madison-Dene County Municipal Reference Service

Government Publications Review, 1975, 2(4), pp 357-358

Services include reference and loan facilities for local officers and members of the city and county, the collection of material on community issues for public and authority access, the establishment of a clearing house for local government information, the maintenance of a central file of all city and county documents, and the co-ordination of journal acquisition in city and county departments.

275 WAIDELICH, A.

Information/reference services from local documents; a case study

Illinois Libraries, April 1975, 57(4), pp 280-281

Describes the service provided to city and county officials by the Madison municipal reference library.

C. SCANDINAVIA

Most of the following are non-English articles but useful pointers to the kinds of services provided elsewhere in Europe. See also reference 6.

276 DESKOV, P.

Skaf bibliotekerne bedre arbejdsbetingelser [Give libraries better working conditions]

Bogens Verden, 1976, 58(4), pp 178-182

According to the Danish Public Library Act of 1964, public libraries are supposed to serve as local information centres but are hampered in this function by their lack of experience in this field, lack of bibliographical control of local publications, over-cautious staff attitudes, etc.

277 BRAEBYE, T.

Biblioteket som kommunal informationscentral [The library as a municipal information centre]

Bogens Verden, 1976, 58(4), pp 183-185

Comments on how public libraries in Denmark can supply various kinds of information—that concerning the local decision making process itself, citizens' rights and pressure group activities. A working group of representatives of local government departments should be set up to direct information services; it is suggested that this might be done through the local press, meetings, leaflets, handbooks, exhibitions and posters. Doubts, however, whether this will of itself stimulate more active participation by the electorate in local affairs.

278 EBDOM, T.

The libraries and municipal information in Sweden

Scandinavian Public Library Quarterly, 1974, 7(4), pp 110-112

Identifies various categories of information vital to the effective operation of municipal government in Sweden and discusses how public libraries can contribute to the more efficient flow of information both within their traditional functions and by establishing municipal information units.

279 ENGBERG, A.

Bibliotekerne ma op pa dupperne [Libraries must be on their toes]

Bogens Verden, 1976, 58(4), pp 163-165

Argues that Danish municipalities with populations over 15,000 should have separate municipal information services providing current awareness and other services. Such units should also collect local documentation and make it available to the public.

280 ETTRUP, F.

Information skal vaere tilgaengelig for alle [Information must be accessible to all]

Bogens Verden, 1976, 58(4), pp 159-162

Looks at the potential role of Danish public libraries in local government and community information provision.

281 HJERMOV, S.A.

Biblioteket—og de andre kommunale forvaltninger [The library—and other municipal bodies]

Bogens Verden, 1976, 58(4), pp 167-169

Since public libraries are viewed as neutral institutions they are in the best position to provide information services both to the local authority and to the public. Librarians need to get to know about the work of local councillors and officers and vice versa. It is important that the library presents information in a way that attracts the layman. Only the largest authorities would need a town hall library but public libraries could help in the setting up of departmental services in their authorities.

282 KJELDSEN, E.

Informationstjenesten horer til pas biblioteket [The information service belongs in the library]

Bogens Verden, 1976, 58(4), pp 165-166

Suggests that failures in local democracy are often due to lack of information and argues that a librarian should be appointed to act as a contact point between library and local council and general public.

283 KOSKI, H.

Municipal communication and the libraries

Scandinavian Public Library Quarterly, 1974, 7(1), pp 22-23

Members of a municipality have a right to information on municipal issues on which to make decisions and public libraries have an important role to play in information provision provided staff are properly trained in such work.

Index

COMPILED BY JEAN BIRD

see also

Annotated bibliography 175-228

Abstracting services 29, 42, 47, 77, 92, 93, 99, 100, 103, 105, 115, 145, 152
computerised 121, 122
co-operative 125-43, 163-4
copyright 130

government documents 142-3

national 104-5, 131-9

non-journal materials 103-4, 140, 142-3

research on 100, 163-4

social workers 35

as sources 75, 92, 113, 114

standards of 115, 135

see also Information Bulletin; Library Bulletin; LOGA; SWIB; SWRLS; Urban Abstracts; WESLINK; YADLOGIS

Abstracts 98, 99, 102, 103, 114, 122

see also Current Awareness Bulletins

Abstracts and Reviews (RICS) 105

Abstracts from Social Work Journals (Doncaster) 139

ACCESS (G.L.C.) 57

Accessibility of information 25, 68-71, 159, 165

intellectual 25, 70, 77-80, 85-9, 165

physical 23, 25, 27-8, 71-7, 80-5, 125-6, 165

subject 118-9, 120

ACOMPLIS (A Computerised London Information System) 58, 59, 60, 104, 117, 120, 129, 146

research registers 76

S.D.I. 107-8

services of 121-2

Acquisitions bulletins 29, 95

in public libraries 99-100, 143

Action research 34

Advisory services 153, 155, 168

research and intelligence units 28

Aims:

local government 17-8, 20, 32, 36

project 8-9

Air Pollution and Noise Bulletin (Birmingham) 128, 134

Analysis (Doncaster) 100

Announcements Bulletin (B.L.L.D.) 76.

Ansaphone services 117

Architects 53, 60, 102

departments 51, 54, 56, 57, 59, 103, 137

needs 34, 93, 115, 130

Architectural Review (Cheshire) 128

Archives 24

Archives and Modern Records

Departments 28, 72, 73, 81, 84

ASLIB 46

Social Sciences Working Group on

Social Welfare Information 34, 46

Transport and Planning Group 46

ASSASSIN (I.C.I.) 121, 122

Audio-visual *see* Non-documentary material

Authorities, local government

censorship 11, 23, 82, 106, 154

and community 17

and co-operation 144-5, 146, 150, 161

effectiveness 31, 89, 36

information handlers 21-4, 26-9

- information services 8, 9, 15, 28, 29, 40, 50, 51, 80, 92-118, 148, 157-9
 - document collections 92
 - documentary 8, 26, 59, 60-1, 72, 112, 148
 - 'empires' 24, 60
 - function 36
 - G.L.C. 129
 - internal documentation 68, 70, 89, 148
 - national officers 67-8
 - research needed 162-9
 - sources 21, 24
 - ward profiles 88
 - and public libraries 151
- Avon 136
- Background Papers* (House of Commons) 109
- Background Papers* (Leicestershire) 109
- Bains Report 5, 15-6, 28, 47, 57
 - see also* Paterson Report
- Barnet 131
- Barnsley 61, 97
- Bath 136
- Bath University 33, 99
- Berkshire 170
 - bulletins 97, 98, 99, 101, 110
 - enquiries 110-1
 - ISBN's 73
- Bexley 95
- Biblio-profiles* (U.S.A.) 109
- Bibliographic services 75-7, 89, 92, 94, 95, 105, 118, 136
 - BNB 75-6, 92
 - control 166
 - local government documentation
 - Canada 85
 - France 85
 - U.S.A. 80, 84
 - see also* Abstracting services; Central registers
- Bibliographies 109, 115, 143, 164, 168
 - see also* Literature Surveys
- Bibliography 37
- Bilateral exchanges 125, 126-30
- Birmingham 50, 97, 100, 105, 127, 134, 154
 - and G.L.C. 128, 129, 130
 - and Leicestershire 128, 129
 - science and technology department 134
 - Weslink 131, 132
- Birmingham University 75
- Birmingham Briefing* 100, 132, 154
- Books:
 - and co-operative services 142
 - value of 6
 - see also* Non-journal material
- Borough Intelligence Newsletter (G.L.C.) 106
- Bradford 47, 100, 140
 - and YADLOGIS 133
- Briefing* (Notts.) 100
- Brent 131
- Bristol:
 - SWRLS 136
- British Library 9, 32, 33, 75, 76, 157, 162, 163, 167
 - Lending Division 76, 77, 84, 93, 165
 - Research and Development Department 9, 34, 156, 157
- British National Bibliography 75-6, 92
- Bromley 97, 116, 126-7
- Bulletins *see* Current Awareness Bulletins
- Cable television 109
- Cambridgeshire 116, 170
- Camden 131
- Canada 84
 - documentation 85
- Canadian Council on Urban and Regional Research 85
- Canadian Urban Index* 85
- Case work records 69, 70
- Catalogues 118, 119
 - G.L.C. 121
 - union 116-7, 136
- Census information 108-9
- Central government 9, 14-5, 28
- Central registers 80-1, 118
- Centralised information services 52-60
 - bibliographic 95
 - in Cheshire 53-7
 - G.L.C. 57-60
 - see also* Federal information services
- Centralised ordering 94, 95
- Centre for Research and User Studies (CRUS) 157
- Chelsea *see* Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea
- Cheshire 5, 58, 94, 96, 97, 98, 101, 102, 106, 117, 118, 120, 122, 128, 138, 170
 - community information service 155-6
 - Director of social services 54
 - local government service 53-7
- Chesterfield 94
- Chicago Municipal Reference Library 80
- Childrens Act, 1975 14

- Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 14
- Citizens Advice Bureaux 152, 154, 155
National Association 152, 156-7
- Civic design department, G.L.C. 59
- Civic Index* (Humberstone) 100, 134
- Civic information service 154
- Civil Defence (Planning) Regulations, 1974 14
- Classification systems 25, 73, 118, 120
unconventional 119
- Clearing H
- Clearing House for Local Authority Social Services Research* (Birmingham) 72, 75
- Clearing houses 77, 167-8
- Cleveland 170-1
bulletins 101, 129, 140
indexes 87, 116, 144
YADLOGIS 133-4, 135
- Collections, documentary 27
central 81-4
U.S.A. 82
local government 47, 62, 73, 92-5, 117
loan 95
sources 92, 93, 94
special 117
retrieval systems 118-22
- Collections, non-documentary 117
- COM *see* Computer Output Microfilm
- Committee Clerks 63, 87, 113, 144
as information handlers 22, 28, 81
restrictive attitudes 23, 64
- Committee Documentation 25, 27-8, 41, 68, 71, 78-9, 146, 159
access 23, 27-8, 70, 74, 82
intellectual 25, 78-9, 85-9
bulletins 41, 105-6
digests 85-6, 106
indexes 28, 41, 64, 87, 113, 144
computerised 87, 109, 116, 120-1, 144
ward 87-8, 109
ward profiles 108-9
- Committee on the Management of Local Government, 1967 78
- Communicating Magnetic Card Typewriter 122
- Communications:
with electorate 17, 149-50, 157
internal 69, 113
Project INISS 35
role of P.R. Sections 27
- Community 148-9
- Community analysis 156
- Community Communications 157
- Community information 7, 17
local government attitudes 158-9
national officers 167-8
public libraries 151, 156
advice 153-4
current awareness 152, 154
directories 151-2
enquiries 153
service points 17, 149-59
sources 130
- Community Land Act, 1975
14, 102, 103
- Computer Output Microfilm 87, 121, 122, 129
- Computers 21, 23, 24, 25, 52
indexes 58-9, 60, 87, 117, 120, 122, 129
committee documentation 87, 88, 104, 109, 116, 120-1, 144
retrieval systems 53, 69, 121-2, 146
S.D.I. 107-8, 121
see also ACOMPLIS; IBM STAIRS; ICL BIRD; KWIC; KWOC
- Conference proceedings 71, 103
- Consortiums 125, 130-9
LOGA 47, 93, 105, 131
SWIB 43, 101, 137-9, 163
SWRLS 136-7, 141, 142
WESLINK 77, 131-3, 135, 136, 137, 141
YADLOGIS 133-6, 141, 142
- Consultancy 153-4, 168
- Consumer Credit Act, 1974 14
- Co-operation, documentary services 7, 20, 52, 83, 121, 161, 165
abstracting services 104, 125-46
advantages 125-6, 139-41
non-journal material 140, 141, 142-3
bibliographies 143, 164
bilateral exchanges 126-30
charging 129, 141
consortiums 130-9
indexes, committee 144
limitations of 141-2
literature reviews 143-4, 164
research 43, 163-4
- Co-operation, non-documentary services 144-6, 150, 161, 163, 164, 165
community services 156-7
- Co-ordinated services *see* Co-operation; Federal

- Copyright 130
 - Acts 75
 - Office 76
- Core journals 101, 125, 141
- Cornwall 136
- Corporate management 5, 15-6, 20, 21, 52, 60, 61, 71, 79, 158
 - and information flow 15-6, 65
 - and needs 16, 36
 - see also* BAINS Report; LAMSAC Report
- Council Minutes, bulletins 105-6, 116
 - see also* Committee documentation
- County Councils Gazette* 101, 141
- County services 50
- Coventry social services department 138
- Crisis enquiries 115-6
- CRRAG Abstracts* (Countryside Recreation Advisory Group) 105
- Cumbria 171
- Current Articles* (S.Yorks) 100, 135
- Current awareness bulletin* (W.Glam.) 101
- Current awareness bulletins 26, 53-4, 60, 62, 70, 92, 93, 94, 95-107, 109, 110, 111, 112, 116, 148, 158
 - acquisitions 99-100
 - and community information agencies 139, 152-3, 154
 - compilation 38, 100, 103-4
 - co-operation 104-5, 125-43, 145, 146
 - advantages 125-6, 139-41, 146
 - bilateral exchanges 125, 126-30
 - consortiums 125, 130-9
 - limitations 141-2
 - non-journal material 103-4, 140, 141-3
 - council minutes 60, 105-6
 - enquiries 101, 111, 114
 - format 98, 99, 100, 103, 133
 - general 53, 106-7
 - G.L.C. 57, 58, 126-30
 - Hansard 98-9, 142
 - journal-based 40, 41, 60, 96, 100-5, 107, 126, 140
 - monitoring 42, 43, 98, 104, 112, 138-9, 163-4
 - national 84, 85, 104-5
 - needs 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43
 - Press 60, 96-8, 128, 140
 - research 99-100, 126, 163-4
 - role 39, 96, 101-2, 110, 145, 146
 - S.D.I. 107
 - subject based 54, 62, 101-2, 103, 105, 106, 109, 117, 137-9, 140
- Current Awareness Service* (Lothian) 100
- Current contents services 99
- Current Literature* (Cheshire) 53
- D.H.S.S. 105
- Daily Intelligence Bulletin* (G.L.C.) 117, 126-7, 129
- Daily List* (H.M.S.O.) 92
- Daily Telegraph* 97
- Data-banks 24
- Data-bases 125, 131, 133, 135, 138, 140, 141
 - ACOMPLIS 58, 59, 60, 76, 104, 117, 121, 129
- Data inventories 118, 145
- Democratisation 149
 - effects 16-7, 71, 149
- Department of Architecture and Civic Design, G.L.C. 57
- Department of the Environment 75, 76, 77, 92, 93, 104, 109, 130, 145, 156
 - H.Q. Library 75, 76
- Departmental information points 6, 21, 26-7, 28, 35, 50, 51, 52, 53-60, 61, 62, 65, 92, 110, 158
 - classification systems 119
 - conflicts 64
 - enquiry answering 112, 114
 - G.L.C. 57-60
 - internal documentation 72-4, 76, 78-9
 - Linked Library Project 62-3
 - members services 117-8
 - and public libraries 53-7, 62-3, 72, 134, 153
- Departmentalism 15, 52, 60, 150
- Deposit laws 80, 81, 84, 165
- Deprived information users 149
- Derbyshire 94, 97, 98, 100, 109, 138, 171
- Devolution 110
- Devon 111, 112, 171
 - bulletins 97, 101, 102, 117, 129
 - research information 106
 - SWRLS 136-7
- Dewey Decimal Classification 118
- Dialogue* (W.Midlands) 105
- Diaries 35
- Digests:
 - charities 155
 - committee 85-6, 106, 108
- Director General, Birmingham 128

- Director General, G.L.C. 57, 58, 60
 Directories, local 151-2, 155, 157
 DISISS (Design of information systems in the social sciences) 33-4, 99-100
District Bulletins (S.Yorks) 88
 Document supply 92-5, 116, 119, 153
 sources 92, 93, 94
 see also Collections
 Documentary services:
 components 26-9, 92, 95, 107, 110, 116-8
 see also Collections; Current awareness bulletins; Enquiries; Indexes; Libraries; Research and intelligence units; S.D.I.
 development 46-50
 current state 50-1
 G.L.C., role 47
 public libraries, role 46-9
 research and intelligence units 49-50, 51
 elected members 68-9
 and information services 49, 52
 centralised 52-60
 federalised 60-3
 monitoring 52
 purpose 20, 144-5
 staffing 47
 Documentation 164-5
 abstracts 142
 committee *see* Committee
 and information services 6, 68
 layout 83, 89
 national centre 83-4
 and needs 68-71, 74
 by ward 70, 78, 87-8
 Documentation, internally-generated 67, 69-89, 143-4, 148, 164-5
 access 68-71, 165
 intellectual 25, 77-80, 85-9
 physical 23, 25, 27-8
 local 71-4, 80-3, 165
 non-local 74-7, 83-5
 importance of 6, 68-70
 needs
 elected members 68-9, 74
 local government 70-1, 74
 officers 69, 74
 sources 72-3, 74-7
 abstracting services 75
 bibliographies 75-6, 80
 central collections 81-2, 84
 central registers 80-1, 83, 84-5
 research registers 76-7
 see also Indexes
 Doncaster 97, 100, 139
 Dorset 136
 East Sussex 73, 94, 100
 Local Government Information Unit 73, 112, 115, 117, 171
 Planning Department 76, 119
 Edinburgh 51
Education Bulletin (Cleveland) 101
 Education department 54, 55, 133, 140
 Careers Office 62, 63
Education Information (Sheffield) 101
 E.E.C. 60, 99, 122
 legislation and needs 14, 15
 Effectiveness 153
 and co-operation 125, 139
 corporate management 5, 16, 21, 149
 information services 8-9, 11, 17, 39, 41-4, 55, 89, 107, 125, 148-9, 150, 161, 162, 166, 169
 documentary 18, 31, 47, 71, 119
 local government 31, 36, 145, 149, 150
 monitoring 6-7, 42-4, 163
 Employment 140
 Energy bulletins 137
Engineering Index 105
 Engineers 53, 61, 105
 Enquiry-answering services 26, 29, 87, 109, 110-6, 148, 153, 154, 155
 abstracts, co-operative 125, 132, 135, 137
 G.L.C. 58
 local government needs 115-6
 monitoring 42, 43
 presentation 115
 public libraries 110-1, 114
 quick reference 111, 112, 113, 158
 referrals 114-5
 sources 114, 155
 subject 113-4
 indexes 113-4, 119, 135
 Environment department 61
 Environmental health department 62
 Ephemeral material 103, 104, 119, 142
 Essex 47, 119
 Estates departments 59, 62
 Evidence proceedings 71
 Fair Trading Act, 1973 14
 Falkirk 51
 Family and community services department 62, 63
 Family Advice Centres 128, 154

- Fast Announcements 107
Federal information services:
 Sheffield 61-3
 South Yorkshire 60-1
Feedback 38, 149
Files, confidential 24, 27, 28
Filing clerks 23, 27, 28, 73
Filing systems 22, 24, 27, 73, 80, 95,
 116, 117
 DISISS study 33, 34
 internal documentation 25, 88
 LAMSAC 21, 85
Financial statements 71
Financial Times 97
Fire brigade, G.L.C. 59
Fire service 133
Format, bulletins 98, 99, 100, 103
France:
 documentation 85

'Gatekeepers' 22, 41
Gateshead 47
General Information System for Planning
 (G.I.S.P.) 1972 21
General Purposes Committee and General
 Services Management Board, Report,
 1976 58
Geo Abstracts 105
GISP *see* General Information System
 for Planning
Gloucestershire 171
 bulletins 97, 100, 132, 141
 SWRLS 136, 137
Government publications 103, 142
Greater London Council 171
 abstracting service *see* Urban Abstracts
 ACOMPLIS database 60, 104, 107
 bulletins 97, 98-9, 106, 126
 committee documentation 87, 116,
 143
 computerisation 58-9, 107-8, 121-2,
 146
 indexes 87, 104, 116, 120, 143
 copyright 130
 departmental information points 57-60,
 63
 information services:
 documentary 53, 57-60, 63
 role and 5, 13, 47, 112
 Intelligence Unit 34, 126
 literature reviews 143
 non-documentary collections 117
 and other authorities 50, 76, 77,
 106, 126-30
 S.D.I. 107-8
 statutory responsibilities 13, 126,
 146
 Survey of London Boroughs 93
Greater London Council, Research
 Library 47, 112, 143, 171
 abstracting services 75, 101, 106,
 126, 128, 129
 ACOMPLIS 58, 59, 76, 121-2
 bibliographies 115
 bilateral exchanges 127-8
 classification systems 118
 computerised retrieval system 121-2,
 146
 function 57-9, 126, 146
 indexes 120, 129, 144
 literature surveys 109, 115, 143
 local government documentation 143
 microfiches 117
 and other authorities 121, 126-7,
 129, 130, 144
 research registers 76, 106, 146
 stock 59, 93, 94, 118, 120
Greater London Development Plan
 87, 117, 120
Greater London History Library 58
Greenwood Press (U.S.A.) 84
Guardian 97
Gulbenkian Foundation 157
Gwent 74, 172

Hackney 131
Hammersmith 88, 108, 127
Hampshire 73, 172
 bulletins 101
 digests 106
 planning department 74, 119
 social services 72, 78-9
 SWRLS 136, 137
Hansard:
 bulletins 98-9, 142, 152
 material 119, 134
Haringey 127
Havering 131
Health authorities 133
Hereford 172
Hertfordshire 156, 172
Hillingdon 101, 127
H.M.S.O.
 selective subscription scheme 92, 142
 serial publications 62
House of Commons Library 109
House of Lords
 and G.L.C. 122

- Housing:
 Act, 1974 14
 departments 59, 60, 69
 literature 166
Housing Information (Sheffield) 101, 128
 Hull 42, 50, 112, 117
 bulletins 47, 106
 civic information 154
 digests 106
 directories 113
 indexes 87, 116, 144
 S.D.I. 88, 108
 Humberside 100, 133, 134, 140, 172
- IBM CMCT 122
 IBM KWIC *see* KWIC
 IBM STAIRS 87, 122
 ICI 121
 ICI Assassin *see* Assassin
 ICL BIRD 87, 144
 ILEA Library 57
Index to Current Urban Documents (U.S.A.) 84
 Indexes 23, 165
 to abstracting services 100, 104-5, 131, 133, 139
 for acquisition 75, 76, 92
 card 83, 87, 113, 116, 119-20, 133, 135, 144
 mechanised 87, 116
 computerised 23, 87, 88, 109, 116, 120-2, 144
 G.L.C. 59, 87, 116, 120, 144
 COM 87, 121, 122, 129
 co-operation 133, 144, 146
 enquiry answering 113, 114, 135
 internal documentation 60, 64, 85-6, 87, 88, 109, 113, 116, 120-1, 144, 148
 local government services 93
 local press 109
 national 84-5
 post-coordinate 119
 standards of 104, 115, 119-20
 subject 113, 118, 119-20, 120-2
see also Abstracts
 Indivisibility, information 5, 6, 8-9
Inform (E.Sussex) 100
 Information:
 access *see* Accessibility
 censorship 11, 23, 64, 106
 dissemination 23, 49, 57, 74, 84, 95, 104, 106, 108, 109, 110
 flow 20, 22, 159, 162-3
 channels 20, 21-3, 35, 69, 96
 diversity 20, 21, 26, 36
 documentary services 20
 increases 11-18
 central government 14-5
 local government reorganisation 11, 12-3, 69
 management techniques 15-6
 open democracy 16-7
 research 162-3
 format 25
 handlers 8, 18, 21-4, 52, 80, 95, 111, 113
 attitudes 22-4, 29, 52, 64, 72, 110-2, 166
 and co-operation 22, 29, 53, 54, 61, 63-5, 81, 166-8
 definition 21-2
 effect 22, 72
 national officer 167-8
 and needs 24, 29, 31-44, 52, 53
 assessment 38-44, 166
 research 31-7
 and users 32, 34, 38, 39, 40, 41-2, 43-4, 52, 53, 64, 112, 115-6, 166
 variety 21-2, 28-9, 52, 63
 indivisibility 5, 6, 8-9
 monitoring 6-7, 40, 43, 79, 80
 needs *see* Needs
 role 11, 12, 24, 26, 107, 112, 144-5
 scientists 5-6
 services 5, 6, 20
 community *see* Community
 co-operative *see* Co-operation
 documentary *see* Documentary
 sources *see* Sources
 storage 22, 23, 24-6, 73-4, 84
 filing systems 21, 22, 24, 25, 27, 34, 73, 80, 85
 users *see* Users
Information Bulletin (Manchester) 97
Information Bulletin (Renfrew) 100
Information Bulletin (Scotland) 75, 92, 103-4
 Information sections 61, 130
 INFROSS (Information requirements of the Social Sciences) 33
 Inner city decay 15
 INISS (Information Needs and Services in Social Service Departments) 6, 7, 35, 43, 138, 162-3
In Parliament (Berkshire) 98
In Perspective (Berkshire) 101

- Institute of Information Scientists 46
Intellectual access 25, 70
 documentary 77-80, 85-9
Internally-generated data *see* Documentation, internally generated
Inter-library loans 93, 94, 142, 144
ISBN's 73, 76, 83
Isle of Wight 136
- Jargon 79
Journal Summarising Service (London) 139
Journals:
 abstracting services 40, 92, 93, 94, 95, 100-3, 103-4, 107, 125-6, 140-2, 146, 152
 co-operative 101, 102, 125-6, 131, 139-41, 146
 see also LOGA; SWIB; SWRLS; WESLINK; YADLOGIS
 circulation 95
 classification 118
 collections 93
 copies of 95
 core 101, 125, 141
 current contents services 99
 display 95
 importance 6, 32, 40
 indexes 119
 research 32, 126, 138
 as sources 74-5, 92, 94, 168
 union catalogues 117, 136
- Kensington *see* Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea
Keywords 88, 107, 121
 see also KWIC
Kirklees 108, 112, 133, 134
KWIC (Keyword in context) 87, 88, 120-1, 144
KWOC (Keyword out of context) 87, 120-1, 122
- Lambeth 154
LAMSAC (Local Authorities Management Services and Computer Committee) 18, 21, 23, 36-7, 53, 65, 73, 85
LASER (London and South East Region) 77
Layfield Inquiry on local government finance 87
Lead pollution 109
Leeds 50
Legal departments 57, 60, 62, 106, 139
- Legal information:
 bulletins 106
 indexes 122
Leicestershire 5, 95, 172
 bulletins 97, 98, 100, 154
 co-operation 128-30, 154
 digests 106
 directories 113
 SWIB 138
 University Library 138
Lewisham 105, 144
 bulletins 127, 131
 indexes 87, 88, 116, 120-1
 ward profiles 108
Librarians:
 aims 8, 32
 attitudes of 23, 24, 39, 48, 49, 112, 114, 145, 158, 159
 attitudes to 24, 25, 48, 96, 111, 114, 158
 community analysis 156
 community information 150, 151, 152, 153, 158
 departmental libraries 26-7, 42
 documentary services 29, 31, 49, 70, 110
 bulletins 39, 40-1, 96, 110, 112, 132, 145-6, 168
 enquiry answering 110-2, 114
 internal 41, 70, 86, 116, 164-5
 sources 81-2, 116, 145
 supply 94, 110
 effectiveness 8, 41-2, 145, 161, 168-9
 information provision 6, 8, 9, 24, 25, 29, 31, 38, 48, 52, 54, 65, 114, 145, 166
 isolation 48
 needs 8, 24, 29, 32, 39-40, 49, 65, 111, 112, 151, 161, 166
 assessment 38-44, 164
 neutrality 23, 32, 48, 110, 114, 158, 159
 and other officers 48
 passivity 48-9, 112
 requirements of 6, 29, 46, 161, 166, 168-9
 role 24, 25, 26, 46, 48-9, 106, 107, 112, 114, 145, 159, 168
 as information handlers 8, 22, 23, 29, 38-9, 61, 64-5, 114, 159, 166-7
 services, development of 46-9
Libraries 20, 24
 departmental *see* Departmental
 mobile 155

- public *see* Public
- Library Association 9, 32, 50, 57
 - and development of services 46-7
- Library Bulletin* (D.of E.) 75, 92, 93, 104, 130
- Library supplier 94
- Link* (Lambeth) 154
- Linked Library Project (Sheffield) 62-3
- Literature searches 40, 114, 115, 153, 168
 - computerised 121-2
- Literature surveys 109-10, 115, 143-4, 164
- Liverpool 47, 50, 101
- Local government:
 - aims 17-8, 20, 22, 23, 32, 148
 - and the community 148-50
 - democracy 16-7, 71, 149
 - deprivation 39
 - documentation 71, 143
 - effectiveness 8, 11, 17-8, 49, 148-9
 - finance 15
 - functions 12-3, 14
 - management 15-6, 18, 36, 71, 148, 149
 - needs *see* Needs
 - neutrality 37
 - reorganisation *see* Reorganisation
 - research 31, 80
 - social changes 14-5
 - statutory responsibilities 13, 14-5, 17, 71
 - terminology 107, 120
- Local Government* (Hampshire) 101
- Local Government Act, 1972 12, 13, 145
- Local Government Chronicle* 101, 141
- Local Government Companion* 113
- Local Government Index* (Hillingdon) 101, 127
- Local Government Information* (Bradford) 100, 133
- Local Government Information* (Newcastle) 100
- Local Government Information Bulletin* (Liverpool) 101
- Local Government Literature* (Devon) 101, 102, 137
- Local Government Publications* (Wiltshire) 99, 136
- Local Government Reorganisation:
 - effects 5, 11, 12, 48, 50, 53, 69, 71, 73, 74, 131, 154
 - England and Wales 12-3
 - London 13
 - Scotland 11, 12
- Local Government (Scotland) Act, 1973 13
- Local governors, needs 36
- Local material 71
- Local organisations:
 - directories 151-2
- LOGA (Local Government Annotations Service) 47, 93, 105, 131
- London Boroughs Association 131
- London Government Act, 1963 13, 126
- London Topics* (G.L.C.) 109, 115
- Lothian Regional Council 172
 - bulletins 100
 - classification systems 118, 119
 - indexes 87, 116, 144
- Madison Municipal Reference Service, N.Y. 80
- Management 11, 15-6, 36, 65, 103
 - departments 119, 126
 - information systems 21, 22, 23, 25, 52, 69, 148
 - officers 107
 - see also* Corporate management
- Manchester 97, 111, 171
- Maps 33
- Markets 41
- Matlock 94
- Mechanical engineering departments 59
- Mechanised retrieval *see* Retrieval systems
- Members, local government 26, 38, 51, 52, 53
 - communication channels 149
 - G.L.C. service 57, 109, 121
 - Linked Library Project 62
 - needs 11, 16, 21, 32, 36, 37, 39, 41, 94, 96, 115-6, 117-8, 148
 - accessibility 77-80, 85-9
 - internal documents 68-70, 74
 - roles 37, 149
 - special services for 16, 28, 105, 108, 114, 115-6, 117-8, 131, 158
- Members Information Service* (W.Midlands) 100, 132
- Members Secretariats 28, 88
- Merseyside 129
- Metropolitan county councils 49, 50
- Microforms:
 - fiche 59, 84, 85, 117
 - film 74, 76, 81
- Micro-Urba* (France) 85

- Mid-Glamorgan 99, 106, 173
- Ministry of Agriculture 14
- Monitoring 79, 80
 - methods 42-3, 138
 - and national information officer 167
 - services 6-7, 40
- Municipal Journal* 101, 141
- Municipal yearbook 113
- Municipal Reference and Research Center (N.Y.) 82

- National abstracting services 104-5
- National and Local Government Statistical Liaison Committee 15, 117, 120
- National document store 84, 165
- National information officers 167-8
- National Technical Information Service (U.S.A.) 84
- Needs 20, 31-44, 54, 65, 162, 165, 166
 - assessment 38-44, 52, 112, 138-9, 148, 152, 162-3, 166
 - bulletins 58, 70, 102, 107
 - community 58, 148-9, 157
 - computerisation 21
 - co-operation 125, 143
 - documentation:
 - external 125, 144
 - internal 68, 69, 70-1, 74, 79, 80, 83-4, 125-6
 - G.L.C. 58
 - information providers 8, 29, 31, 32, 38-44, 111-2, 114, 166
 - intellectual access 25
 - local government 11, 12, 13, 15, 20, 23, 24, 37, 70-1, 74, 110, 125, 148-9
 - and corporate management 16
 - and democratisation 17
 - officers 34, 35, 36-7, 68-70, 74, 109, 115, 142, 148
 - members 11, 16, 21, 32, 36, 37, 39, 41, 94, 96, 115-6, 117-8, 148
 - planners 24, 33, 93, 156, 162
 - profiles 107-8
 - rapid response 94
 - research 6-7, 31-8, 40, 58, 68, 93, 138, 157, 162-3, 165
 - social workers 6, 24, 33-4, 35-6, 56, 69, 70, 138
- Neighbourhood councils 110
- Net Book Agreement, 1957 95
- Newcastle 50, 107
 - bulletins 47, 99, 100
 - classification systems 119
- Newham 131
- Newsletters 106-7, 145, 155, 167
- New Society 101
- Newspapers 71, 94, 146
 - see also* Press
- Non-documentary material 25, 117
 - G.L.C. 59
 - sources 27
 - see also* Microforms
- Non-documentary services 117-8
 - and co-operation 145-6
 - sources 117
- Non-journal material:
 - abstracting services 75, 103-4, 140, 141-3
 - bibliographic control 105
 - G.L.C. 59
 - internal documents 71
- Non-serial publications 103
- North Tyneside 108
- North Yorkshire 133, 134
- Nottinghamshire 100, 173
 - Planning Department, survey 51

- Observer 97
- Officer working group 63
- Officers, local government 26, 27, 28, 38, 53, 100, 117
 - communications channels 149
 - G.L.C. services 57, 121
 - information handlers 16, 22, 23, 68
- Linked Library Project 62
- needs 11, 21, 32, 34, 36, 39, 47, 94, 96, 115, 148
 - internal documents 69, 74, 77
 - intellectual access 77-80, 85-9
 - style 79, 88-9
- Official Journal* (E.E.C.) 99
- Optical coincidence cards 88, 116, 119
- Oxfordshire 136

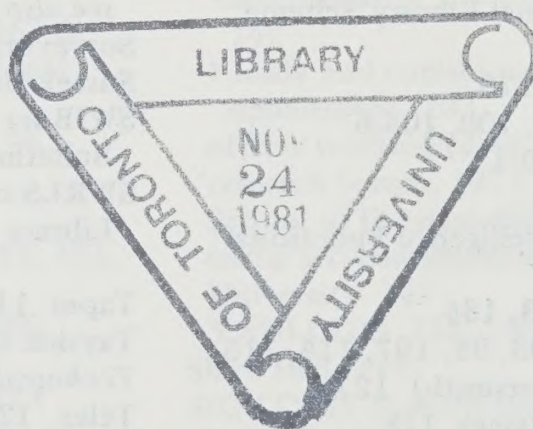
- Pamphlets 136, 142
- Parliamentary bulletins 152
- Parliamentary departments 57
- Parliamentary Digest* (Derbyshire) 98
- Parliamentary Review* (Cheshire) 53, 98
- Paterson Report 16
- Photocopies 95, 98, 99, 105, 128, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 138, 139, 152
- Planning Bulletin* (Cleveland) 101
- Planning:
 - departments 21, 27, 28-9, 51, 54, 56, 62, 63, 72, 79, 106, 109, 129
 - co-operation 145

- financial aid 57
 - publications lists 73-4
 - thesaurus 119
 - officers 22, 32, 53, 61, 102
 - needs 15, 24, 33, 34, 70, 93, 115, 130, 163
 - services 77, 103, 105, 133
 - permissions 71
 - proposals 74
 - research registers 76
 - Planning Exchange, Scotland 75, 92, 103, 106, 126, 140
 - Planning Review* (Cheshire) 101
 - Policy reports 71
 - indexes 116
 - Politics 9, 12, 26
 - information handlers 23, 68, 114, 159
 - needs 32, 36, 37, 68, 166
 - and public libraries 82, 83, 158-9
 - Polytechnic of North London 9, 10
 - Post-coordinate indexing 119
 - Post-entry training 95
 - Precis* (Gloucestershire) 100, 132
 - Precis* (Lewisham) 127
 - Press 36, 75, 88, 92, 93, 94, 148
 - bulletins 29, 64, 96, 105, 128, 140, 141, 152
 - back-up services 98
 - coverage 95
 - format 98, 99, 103
 - frequency 97-8
 - indexes 113
 - cuttings 27, 64, 95, 97, 98, 134
 - indexes 119, 121
 - releases 29
 - and ward profiles 109
 - Pressure groups 36, 110, 130, 149, 157
 - material 94, 142, 149
 - Prices Act, 1974 14
 - Printing units 72, 73, 81, 83
 - Profile Index* (Canada) 85
 - Profiles:
 - community 156
 - user need 107-8
 - ward 78, 87-8, 108-9
 - Project:
 - aim 8-9
 - authorities contacted 170-4
 - background 9
 - bibliography 175-228
 - data-base 9
 - research suggestions 161-9
 - Publications units 129, 165
 - Public enquiry documents 71
 - Public libraries 26
 - acquisition, internal documents 71-4, 77
 - intellectual access 86-8
 - sources 74-7, 80-2, 84
 - and Authorities 12, 38, 64, 153, 161
 - classification systems 118
 - documentary services:
 - abstracting 29, 47, 53-4, 57, 58, 62, 77, 94, 105, 110, 111, 145-6
 - co-operation 126-8
 - LOGA 131
 - SWIB 137-9
 - SWRLS 136-7
 - WESLINK 131-3, 135, 137
 - YADLOGIS 133-6
 - centralised 52-7
 - collections 54, 62, 73, 81-2, 93-5
 - co-ordinated 60, 62-3
 - to departmental libraries 53-63, 93, 95
 - federal 60-3
 - liaison 54
 - post-entry training 95
 - public 53, 54
 - role in 46-9
 - S.D.I. 29, 134
 - union catalogues 54, 116-7
 - enquiry-answering 110-11, 135, 137, 153
 - and G.L.C. 126-8, 129, 130
 - and information points 64, 150, 153-4
 - community 130, 150-9
 - local authority 6-7, 26, 62-3, 72-4, 81, 134
 - information services 5, 50-1, 56, 150
 - community 151-7
 - confidentiality 64, 72, 82
 - passiveness 48-9
 - pioneers 5, 47
 - role 52, 55, 111, 150, 151, 153, 157, 158
 - needs 53, 62, 151, 155
 - non-documentary services 145-6
- Public Libraries Research Group
 - Aims and Objectives* 47
- Public library discounts 95
- Public relations:
 - departments 27, 29, 64
 - and libraries 64, 108
- officers 22, 63
 - attitudes 22-3
- units 97
- Public utilities 155

- Questionnaires 34, 43
interview schedules 35
- Rate support grant 15, 38
- Recreation and culture department 61
- Reference:
enquiries *see* Enquiry-answering service
material 113
- Regional library bureaux 84
- Registers:
documents 80-1, 84-5, 118
Canada 85
France 85
U.S.A. 84-5
research 28, 76-7, 106, 115, 145, 146
- Renfrew 51, 95, 100
- Report:
literature 76, 136
classification 118
- Reprographic unit 95
- Research:
abstracting services 100, 138
Bulletins 106
Clearing House 166-8
co-operation 126, 163-4
information services 162-9
community 156, 157
journals 32, 138
local government documentation 164-5
planners 100, 110, 126
social services 33-4, 35, 43, 51, 75, 99-100, 138, 162-3
techniques 162-3
user needs 31, 32, 34-7, 138, 162-3
- Research and Intelligence Functional Group (S.Yorks) 61
- Research and Intelligence Units 26, 28, 49-51, 60, 64, 72, 81, 86
officers 22, 167
services 105, 106, 108, 111, 117, 131, 132, 145, 156
- Research and Surveys* (D.of E.) 76
- Research Library *see* G.L.C.
- Research Memoranda* (G.L.C.) 117
- Research registers 28, 76-7, 106, 115, 145, 146
- Research Reports* (G.L.C.) 117
- Research reports, access to 83-4
- Research Review* (Cheshire) 106
- Residential Care Association 139
- Retrieval systems 21, 24-5, 28, 53, 80, 82, 87, 114
centralisation 53
classifications 25, 73, 118-9
subject indexes 113
computerised 107-8, 120-2
manual 119-20
mechanised 88, 116, 119, 120
see also ACOMPLIS; Indexes; KWIC; KWOC
- Rotherham 133, 136
- Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea 36, 78, 131
- Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors 105
- Rural:
needs 15
services 50
- Rustin, M. 149
- Scan* (Leicestershire) 128
Scan in Parliament (Leicestershire) 98
Scan Review (Leicestershire) 100
- Scientific Library, G.L.C. 58, 59
- Scotland 12, 13, 16, 50-1, 75, 92
see also Planning Exchange
- Scottish Development department 106
- Scottish Planning Appeals Decisions* 106
- Selection Micro-Urba* (France) 85
- Selective Dissemination of Information (S.D.I.) 26, 29, 88, 98, 99, 107-9, 134, 137, 138, 148
computerised 107-8, 121
ward profiles 108-9
- Sheffield 50, 51, 61-3, 101, 128, 141, 154, 162
- Administrative and Legal Law Library 142
- Family and community services department 107
- officer working party 62, 63
- research forum, 1974 34, 51
- School of librarianship 107, 138
- social services department 35
- University 167
- YADLOGIS 133, 134
- Shire Hall 110
- SIG-LOGIS (Special Interest Group—local government information services) 167
- Site engineers 69
- Site offices 27
- Slides 117, 120
- Social science literature 75, 166
- Social Sciences Working Group on Social Welfare Information 46
- Social Service Abstracts* (D.H.S.S.) 105

- Social service departments 51, 54, 56,
 78-9, 138, 155, 156
 classification systems 73
 co-operation 72
 directories 151
 financial aid 57
 officers 6, 162, 163
 needs 24, 32, 33-5, 38, 70, 138
 services 133, 139, 140, 163
Social Services Abstracts (Wiltshire)
 101, 128
Social Services Bulletin (Cleveland) 101
Social Services Review (Cheshire) 101
Social Work Information Bulletin 43,
 101, 137-9, 163
 Society of Archivists 81
 'Soft' information 52, 79, 166
 SOLACE (Society of Local Authority
 Chief Executives) 50
 Somerset 136
 Sources of information:
 and abstracting services 142-4, 146
 and Councillors 36
 documentary 8, 26-7, 28, 29, 52, 69,
 114, 144-5
 of documents 92-3, 94
 internal 74-7, 80-2, 84-5
 enquiry answering 113, 114
 and needs 15, 24, 31, 39, 69, 70
 and planners 33, 70
 and social workers 33-4, 35, 69, 70
 variety 22, 24, 29, 52, 114, 144-5, 150
 South West Energy Group 117, 137
 South West Regional Library Scheme
 136-7, 141, 142
 South Yorkshire 173
 bulletins 97, 99, 100, 105-6
 co-ordination 60-1
 indexes 88, 116
 Research and Intelligence Functional
 Group 61
 YADLOGIS 133, 135
 Special libraries 93, 95, 107, 114, 115
Spectrum (Hammersmith) 127
 Speech writing services 118
Staff Digest (Wiltshire) 33
 Staff newsletters 107
 Standards for Reference Services in
 Public Libraries, 1970 47
 Standing Conference on London and
 South East Regional Planning 74, 120
 Standing Council on London and South
 East Regional Planning 117
 Statistical bulletins 106
 Statistical departments 15
 Statutes, local government 142
 and information flow 14, 15
 Strathclyde 51
 Structured observation 34-5, 162-3
 Subject-based bulletins 101-5, 140
 coverage 101-2
 national services 104-5
 quality 103
 selection 102-3
 sources 103-4
 Subject enquiries *see* Enquiry answering
 Subject indexes 113
 computerised:
 ACOMPLIS 121-2
 KWIC 120
 KWOC 120, 121, 122
 STAIRS 122
 manual 119-20
 mechanised 88, 116, 119
 Suffolk 95, 173
 bulletins 97, 101
 community information 155
 inter-library loans 93
 S.D.I. 107
 Summaries, committee 86
*Summaries of Research in the Social
 Services* (Wandsworth) 139
 Sunday Telegraph 97
 Sunday Times 97
 Survey:
 data 33
 reports 71
 see also Project
 Surveyors 53, 55, 62
 Sussex University Library 94
 SWIB *see* Social Work Information
 Bulletin
 SWRLS *see* South West Regional
 Library Scheme
 Tapes 117
 Tayside Regional Council 119, 173
Technical Scan (Suffolk) 101
 Telex 128
 Thesaurus 108, 116, 119, 122
 planning 119
 Theses 33, 103, 142
 the Times 97
Today's Press 53
 Trades Descriptions Act, 1968 14
Training (Doncaster) 139
 Translation services 118
 Treasurers departments 54, 59, 61, 151

- Tyne and Wear 97, 106, 108, 111, 173
- U.D.C. classification system 118
- Union catalogues 116-7, 136
- United States:
- central collections 82
 - community analysis 156
 - Department of Commerce 84
 - information services 109, 165
 - co-ordinated 157
 - registers, central 80
 - registers, national 84-5
- University College, London 156
- Urban Abstracts* (G.L.C.) 101, 117
- coverage 99, 103
 - other authorities 127, 129, 130, 154
 - production 122
 - as a source 75, 92, 93, 104
- Urban Aid and Community Development Project 149
- Urban and Regional References* (Canada) 85
- Urban Documents Microfiche Collection 84
- Urbanisation
- and needs 14-5
- Users 39, 163
- and bulletins 103, 104, 135, 138
 - contact with 6, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 52, 53, 55, 56, 57, 64, 110, 166
 - and enquiries 110-2
 - information stores 22, 25-6, 31-2, 33, 39, 54, 70, 150
 - local government 39
 - needs *see* Needs
 - and use 36
 - work roles 6
- Valuers 60
- abstracting service 105
 - departments 59
 - needs 34, 93
- Viewdata 152
- Visual displays 118, 152
- computer 122
- Voluntary Action Lewisham 152
- Voluntary organisations 130, 139, 149, 152, 155, 158, 164
- Wakefield 133
- Wales 12, 50, 51
- Wandsworth 47, 139
- Ward:
- documentation 70, 78, 87-8
 - profiles 88, 108-9
- Waste disposal bulletin 134
- Water Act, 1973 13
- Water authorities 133
- Weekly Annotations* (Derbyshire) 100
- Weekly Parliamentary Supplement* (G.L.C.) 98-9, 127
- WESLINK 77, 131-3, 136, 137, 141
- West Glamorgan 101, 105, 106, 117, 173
- West Midlands 100, 106, 116, 122, 128, 132, 137, 144
- Westminster 131
- White, Brenda 33, 48, 51, 77, 119
- Who's Who* 113
- Wiltshire 34, 43, 93, 174
- bibliographies 115
 - bulletins 97, 99, 101, 128, 129
 - document storage 74
 - ISBN's 73
 - social service department 73
- SWRLS 136, 137
- Written Answers 98, 99
- YADLOGIS (Yorkshire and District Local Government Indexing Service) 133-6, 141, 142
- Yearbooks 113
- Yorkshire 137, 142, 146
- see also* North Yorks; South Yorks



PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE
CARDS OR SLIPS FROM THIS POCKET

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO LIBRARY

JA
3113
G63

Grayson, Lesley
Library and information
servicers to local
government

Government
Publications

Librarians need to be able to relate their work to the purpose for which it is ultimately required, and local authorities must be able to take the best advantage of the kind of information research service which the librarian is able to offer.

The basic data were collected during a one-year research project financed by the British Library Research and Development Department, and based at the Polytechnic of North London School of Librarianship in 1976/77. The result is a bird's eye view of library activity in local government: useful to the librarian and the local councillor.

There is an extensive bibliography.

The Library Association, 7 Ridgmount Street, London WC1E 7AE

ISBN 0 85365 810 2

£10.75 (to LA members)